

The Tri-Ess

The Femme Mirror



Femme Mirror

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Summer 1995

The Femme Mirror Summer 1995

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- 1) The Femme Mirror will not publish the last name of any Tri-Ess member without the expressed written consent of the member, unless the surname is known to be a pseudonym.
- 2) We encourage all contributors to the Mirror to adopt a pseudonym when submitting articles and letters for publication. We request that you place the surname in quotation marks so that we will know it is a pseudonym.
- 3) We request that each contributor include her Tri-Ess number on all material.
- 4) Contributors should avoid use of true last names in letters or articles, and particularly in accounts of chapter activities and other events. We reserve the right to edit such material to remove surnames or other potentially compromising information.

Please help us to serve you in a professional manner. Thank you.

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Summer 1995

Table of Contents

- 4 - Executive Director's Page
- 5 - Editorial Expressions by Brenda
- 6 - A Movement Has Just Been Born by Sarah DePalma
- 7 - Suckers or Allies? by Sarah dePalma
- 8 - What Revolution? by Merissa Sherrill Lynn
- 9 - What Do You Do When You've
Achieved All Your Goals? Jane Ellen Fairfax
- 10 - The Feminine Response by Frances Fairfax
- 11 - In My Opinion by Denise
- 12 - The River of Life by Vanessa Kaye
- 13 - Tri-Ess Board of Directors
- 14 - So You Are Single by Dr. Jaye
- 15 - Letters to the Editor
- 15 - CD by Sherri Belmar
- 19 - Chapter News Update by Jane Ellen Fairfax
- 26 - Wanted: A Few Good Sisters by Denise Summers
- 27 - I'll Have One Chapter To Go by Denise Summers
- 31 - Giving Campaign Big Success
- 32 - Sex and Crossdressing by JoAnn Roberts, Ph.D.
- 33 - Sexuality and Intimacy by Linda Peacock
- 34 - Fill 'Um Up! by Carol Beecroft
- 36 - Summer Board Beating by Kymberleigh Richards
- 37 - Do You Really Think You
Can Change Things? by Rachel Miller
- 38 - Holiday En Femme 1995
- 40 - Crossdressing 101 by Genevera Martin
- 42 - Farewell by Merissa Sherrill Lynn
- 45 - California Dreamin' 1995 by Vicki Thomas
- 48 - The Clothing Lens Effect by Michelle Kingsbury
- 50 - A Single Crossdresser Speaks To
Wives Of Crossdressers by Vicki Thomas
- 52 - A Sack of Gold For Your Petticoat, Ma'am?
by Cindy N.
- 53 - The Other Side by Roger Peo, Ph.D.
- 54 - Is The Community Coming Of Age? by Carol Ann Lee
- 55 - How Nature Makes Men Out Of Women
- 56 - Transvestite Terrorizes Town by Sofronia Anne Strong
- 57 - Hey, Good Looking! Section
- 65 - Celebrate Transgender Employment Day - P. Frye
- 66 - I Missed My Chance by Debbie Hahn
- 67 - Someone Wants to Take My Dress Away
by Deborah Dean
- 68 - Tri-Ess Chapters and Forming Chapters
- 70 - Tri-Ess Pen Pals
- 71 - Big Sister Report by Cynthia Silva

About Our Cover Girl...

Pictured here with "The Mummy," originally played by Boris Karloff in a 1932 movie, Vicki Thomas (TX-1669-M) takes time off from California Dreamin' to tour the back lot of Universal Studios in Universal City, California.

Although she is near the big Five O, Vicki is still a girl at heart. Single, with no strong family commitments, she is somewhere between a crossdresser and a transgenderist. While she still works as a man, the majority of her free time is spent en femme. Vicki has never taken hormones and has never needed electrolysis. She has always felt that becoming socialized into a woman's role was more important than doing the chemistry first. She has a circle of friends who know her only as a woman and would be shocked to find out she is a man.

Vicki has never let her success in passing make her forget where she came from. A founding member of Tau Chi Chapter, Vicki has served as Secretary-Treasurer and Editor of the chapter's newsletter, The Femme Forum. Currently she is on the Board of Directors of Tau Chi Chapter in charge of Singles' Concerns. When she is not looking after her own growth, Vicki likes to help novice crossdressers who want to go out in public. A fixture in Montrose, she is known and respected by Houston's gay community and is therefore the perfect guide for those wanting a safe exposure to the outside world where they don't have to fear being ridiculed. Gays know her as Vicki Valentine, an amateur drag performer and stand-up comedian.

In her masculine role Vicki works for a well known hotel chain. Her hobbies are golf, fishing and photography. She likes books by late 19th Century and early 20th Century authors. Classic movies turn her on more than current releases, with her favorite being 2001: A Space Odyssey. Time or Newsweek usually prevail when she desires a magazine, though she likes to thumb through women's magazines while waiting in the grocery check-out line. Add to this the articles she writes for the Femme Forum and the Mirror and you have one busy girl. However, Vicki will answer intelligent letters as time permits.

Vicki's next goal is to get a part-time job as a woman. Only after she has become socialized into a typical woman's work role without the perks and prestige men take for granted will she consider hormones and living full time as a woman.

About This Issue

This Mirror has something for almost everyone. There are calls to political action, and cautions about our priorities. How-To's abound, from fashion tips to skin care to Tri-Ess Shoe Talk. From our highly successful Phi Epsilon Mu chapter in Central Florida comes a great "How-To" on chapter formation. The great "Why?" is discussed from both biological and sociological perspectives. There's fiction and humor and even (Gasp!) SEX. You'll find articles that challenge, that console, that make you think, and that tickle your funnybone. (Yes, Jaye, I know that's too many "that's" in that sentence!) Keep those great articles coming, sisters. This issue is 76 pages long, and we just ran out of space. If your article isn't in this one, look for it in the Fall issue. We are already putting it together. -Frances

Summer 1995

If You Are
Moving.....

Please Notify us of your Change
of Address by writing to:

Donna Martin
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Executive Director's Page

by Carol Beecroft

Hello !

There are several things which are important to me which I hope will be as important to you after reading this issue of the Femme Mirror.

Foremost is the announcement and article dealing with the new library project. For many years we have encouraged Tri-Ess members to use our little library index cards. As many of you have known, the index card was inserted in the index card file in libraries. On each card was an explanation of the word crossdressing or transvestism and then the name and address of the national office. We had many contacts from people all over the US, as well as in Canada. These index cards did help people to contact us and that was great. However, many libraries are now using computers, and this means that our index cards are of no use in such libraries.

The new three year project which is projected to fill 1000 libraries over three years will accomplish much more than the index cards ever did. Now people will be able to actually read books. So I hope that not only will you like what is written in the article, "Fill 'Um Up," but that you will be motivated to get involved with this project. Please read that article very seriously.

Another project that I have been pushing is the couples groups. Everywhere I go I find people interested in developing couples groups in their areas. The San Joaquin valley group had a barbecue at my home one weekend last month. We had a total of 18 people. We never get this many people out to a chapter meeting, but the husbands and wives really like the socializing involved and attend such gatherings in large numbers. I am planning to work this project into the Clarion so that chapter leaders can push it in their chapters. At our weekend gathering here in Tulare, we
Summer 1995



Carol Beecroft

had food all over the place. The socializing was so pleasant to observe. It made you feel that all the work involved in starting this local couples group was well worth the effort. Do talk about this concept of a couples group with other couples in your area. It really does bring both husbands and wives out of the woodwork, so to speak, and I really do believe that our couples are benefiting greatly from associating with others. Please contact me if you would like help.

I went to Kappa Beta chapter about a month ago and met some terrific people. They have very competent people leading the chapter. I think that my visit was very beneficial to all the members and I was able to help in several areas. I am scheduled to visit three chapters by the next time another issue of the Mirror comes out. Flying planes for 2 out of 3 days is tiring. But I really believe that my visits representing Tri-Ess International are greatly appreciated, so I shall continue doing the same. Naturally, while in North Carolina I talked to several people about a local couples group. Before I forget,

many of you have received the newsletter from the national couples group. If you are a couple and would like to get on the mailing list (not having received the couples newsletter), please write to me in care of the national office.

Most of you now know that we have a professional board of scholars who are very active in pushing understanding of crossdressing to the public. I want to call your attention to Sally Hunt, who recently wrote a letter to Ann Landers after Ann had included in her column some incorrect information about crossdressing. No doubt most of you read her letter in Ann's column. It is a shame that Ann did not give Sally's name as the writer of the letter. (She was signed "Fresno" instead.) Sally really does her best to further understanding of crossdressing to the public.

Another two members of the professional board of scholars are Vern and Bonnie Bullough. These two nice people are the authors of the book *Crossdressing, Sex and Gender*. Drs. Bonnie and Vern Bullough were recently awarded the Kinsey Award at a meeting of Quad-S for the mid continent region. This award was a joint one from the Kinsey Institute and Quad-S. Over the years, there have been eleven such awards, notably the first going to Dr. Kinsey and a later award going to Dr. Masters (Masters and Johnson). The Bulloughs received the eleventh Kinsey Award for research that they have done in human sexuality. We, as an organization devoted to crossdressers, should consider ourselves highly blessed to have Sally Hunt and Bonnie and Vern Bullough on our professional staff.

I recently had the opportunity to speak over station DZMX in Hartford, CT. I am appreciative of Chris Shannon who was so courteous to me. I do think that I got our message over to many

listeners in that area. In addition, I was the guest of Chris over station KZMX in New Britain, CT. I was surprised how quickly several people called me after the show- which was good enough to give out our phone number. Anyway, I appreciated the phone calls and sent the interested parties our booklet.

I received an interesting letter from Kay in Mountain Home, AR. She wrote, "Last summer, my own brother confessed that he is also a crossdresser... Imagine all these years we were hiding from each other...Initially, his lady friend discreetly informed me, when she observed me spending so much time looking through her ladies' dresses catalog, that 'it must be in the genes.'"

Kay went on to tell me that she called a women's store and inquired about some women's slacks. During the conversation with the saleslady over the phone, Kay told her about crossdressing. At that point the saleslady told Kay that she had dated a crossdresser about a year before. Like I always say, lift up a stone and you'll find a crossdresser there. My brother was also a crossdresser. We, too, were crossdressing, completely unaware that the other was a crossdresser. Amazing!

Kay also mentioned that there are crossdressers everywhere. Any large town or city has them, and they can be located by contacting ladies' apparel shops and casually asking the salesladies if they have any crossdressers as customers. I've asked in this town of 10,000 and they tell me that there are others. Leave a card identifying Tri-Ess with these sales people.

That's it for now. Don't forget to read the article about our library project and do talk up the couples group.

Important Research/ Study

Drs. Vern and Bonnie Bullough, Dr. Milton Diamond and Carol Beecroft are looking for twins where at least one is a crossdresser. The search for such twins has taken place in many countries, including the United States and Australia. If the reader is such a twin or knows of a pair of twins, please contact Carol Beecroft.

Editorial Expressions

by Brenda Thomas



I hope that you will all sit up and take notice of what this editorial is all about. I want to express my deepest thanks to Sarah DePalma for writing the following articles, although they were not originally written for the Mirror.

If you are one of those who question the wisdom or the necessity of political involvement, or who wonder why we keep talking about cooperative action with other organizations within the transgender community, let me remind you of Benjamin Franklin's famous words: "...We must indeed all hang together, or assuredly we shall all hang separately."

Are there reasons to get political, or just politically involved? I think there is. What we are seeing is a eroding of our natural freedoms. In America's great foundation document, the Declaration of Independence, it states:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness."

There were no qualifiers, as I read the statement.

It's Time America! and the Tri-Ess chapters in your area are looking for volunteers and helpers. I urge all of you to get involved in any way that you can.

THE FOLLOWING EDITORIALS HAVE BEEN WRITTEN BY SARAH DEPALMA, CHAIR OF IT'S TIME, TEXAS!, AND CO-HOST/PRODUCER OF "AFTER HOURS" ON KPFT RADIO IN HOUSTON. PERMISSION IS GIVEN TO REPRINT OR RETRANSMIT WITH THE FULL CONSENT OF THE AUTHOR.

June 25, 1995

A Movement Has Just Been Born

by Sarah De Palma

I hope all of you will please forgive some emotion from a person who is not normally given to such things. Note today's date, June 25, 1995 and let it burn into your memory. On this day a truly national transgender movement has been born. Keep this date in your mind. You will someday be able to tell your friends and family you were a participant in this event.

First of all, the Board of Directors of The Society for the Second Self (Tri-Ess), the world's largest association of mostly heterosexual crossdressers, has passed three resolutions of remarkable proportions:

1) Tri-Ess is firmly committed to ending intolerance, disrespect, harassment, intimidation bigotry, racism, hatred and bias in society and strongly encourages its members to work toward the elimination of such discrimination wherever it exists.

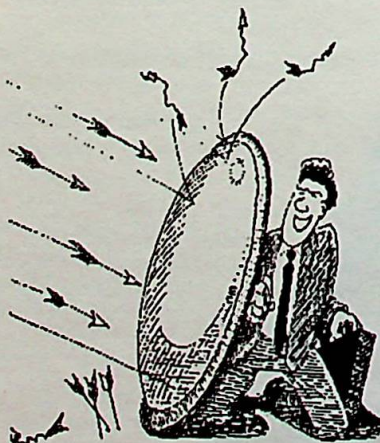
2) Further, Tri-Ess believes that crimes based on such intolerance, disrespect, harassment, intimidation, bigotry, racism, hatred and bias should be firmly punished, and we strongly support the enactment of hate crimes legislation that will incorporate such punishment. (*Forgive me Jane Ellen but I'm crying as I write this. After all our hard work on hate crimes legislation you can't imagine what this means to me.*)

3) Further, Tri-Ess stands firmly for an end to discrimination in the workplace and supports legislation prohibiting discrimination against any person for any reason that is not related to bona fide occupational qualifications for the relevant job classification or job performance.

Wow! And on the same day I find this other news in my mailbox. I find a post from Tere Fredrickson in San Antonio concerning her conversation with Elizabeth Birch, head of the Human Rights Campaign Fund (the largest gay/lesbian community lobbying organization in Washington, DC). If Tere will forgive my abbreviation of her post, the essence is the HRCF has no intention of doing squat for us transgendered people. Nada, zip, zilch and nothing. We are totally on our own and no way in hell do they include us in the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) currently before Congress. This confirms the same basic message given to Riki Wilchins the day before.

Imagine that! On the very day Tri-Ess issues one of the most powerful statements in memory, the HRCF slams the door on transgender inclusion.

Ladies and gentlemen, meet the issues on which the national transgender movement will be built...employment discrimination, employment discrimination and employment discrimination. All delivered in a nice bow, courtesy of the HRCF. We ought to send them a thank you note.



Is there a transgendered person anywhere that does not understand employment discrimination? Can there be a transgendered person who doesn't think this is the key political issue on our plate today? Could an easier target be served up than a group which is predominately white, predominately male, and extremely arrogant? Is there an easier message to explain than a tiny minority asking to receive protection versus a giant who wants to discriminate? My goodness, in my wildest dreams I could never have envisioned such a scenario!

And it happens at time when the Law Conference, Transsexual Menace, Transgender Nation, It's Time, America! and now Tri-Ess are working together for the first time in history. Mark this date in bold red letters...we became a community today.

In the days ahead we will have decisions to make. Now that we know where HRCF stands, what is the best way to maintain pressure on them without sounding shrill? How do we make our political organizations funded so that the individual leaders no longer have to pay expenses out of pocket? How do we bring individual media outlets like IFGE, Renaissance, and Cross Talk into this revolution without scaring away their readership?

Yes, these and many more things will need to be decided in the months ahead. And yes, the potential to fall into bickering will certainly be there. But tonight I have the sense our fledgling movement has not only come together, but we have been given the issue upon which there is universal agreement and the fertile soil for future growth.

Savor this moment; a movement has just been born.

As most of you are probably aware,

Suckers or Allies?

by Sarah DePalma

transgender political groups around the nation are absolutely furious with the Human Rights Campaign Fund (HRCF). For more than a year It's Time, America!, Transsexual Menace, and other transgender political organizations worked to have transgenders included in the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA). Then, in a move that can only be described as discriminatory, the HRCF stripped transgenders out of the bill and refused to allow any amendments that would benefit transgenders.

In case you miss the point of that action, it means gays and lesbians would receive protection against employment discrimination, but transgendered individuals would not.

The reasons that we have been given for this action by the HRCF illuminates both their ignorance and their arrogance. They say things like, "The issues of transgenders are different from those of gays and lesbians;" or, "You could pursue case law solutions." They tell us the HRCF was part of a coalition of more than two hundred organizations, and imply they were for our inclusion, but that those damned other one hundred ninety nine organizations just wouldn't listen. Excuses, excuses, excuses.

Transgenders see the real issue as betrayal, and that is what is fueling their anger.

Many transgenders (some say as many as half) are in fact gay or lesbian identified. But they understand that if ENDA were to pass without transgender inclusive language, their employer could simply say, "I didn't fire them for being gay or lesbian. I fired them for being transgendered." Let's face it, it leave a loophole the size of a mack truck for an employer to drive through and they will do it.

Many of us have worked on behalf of the gay and lesbian right movement

for twenty year or more. All this time we thought this was a human rights movement, brothers and sisters locked arm in arm in the demand for freedom. We have contributed untold amounts of time, money, and effort on behalf of gay/lesbian causes. We view the action of the HRCF as saying, "Suckers! We'll take all you can give us, but we never thought you were one of us. Shove off!" Much of the fury heard coming from transgenders is pain, real, honest, deep pain. We feel as if we have been slashed by our best friends. We don't understand it. We didn't deserve it, and we hurt.

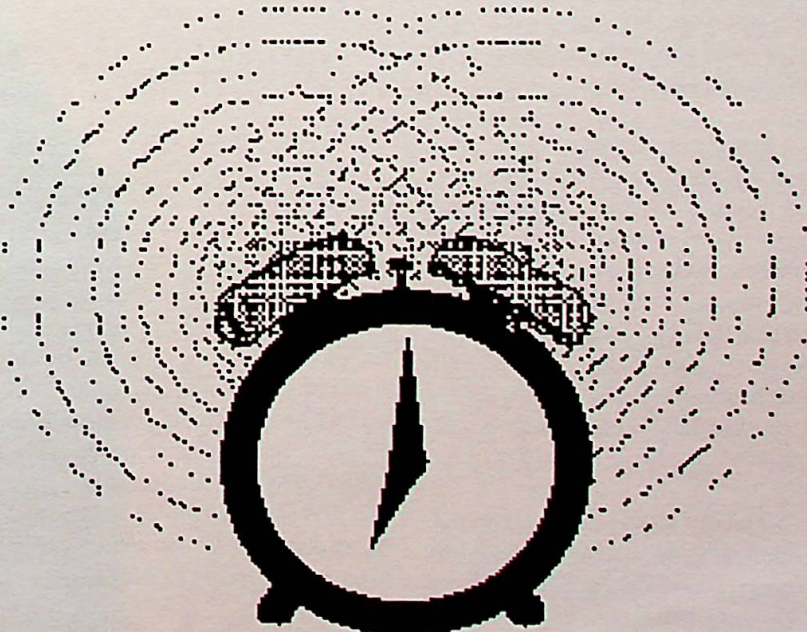
The worst of it is that episodes like this have taken place elsewhere. In Texas, the Lesbian Gay Rights Lobby intentionally excluded transgenders from hate crimes legislation. In Rhode Island, transgenders got cut from protective legislation. In Maryland, gay/lesbian political groups are fighting transgender inclusion on several fronts.

Yet all of this comes at a time when gays and lesbians in San Francisco worked hard to get transgenders protected under their anti-discrimination law. Gays and lesbians in Minnesota

and Colorado work together with transgenders on all sorts of issues. Several national gay and lesbian groups have issued strong statements on behalf of transgender inclusion.

Frankly we are confused. Is the HRCF representing the majority view of gays and lesbians, or are the groups favoring inclusion representing the majority view? This is the key question transgenders want to have answered. We have to know if we are suckers or allies, and that answer has to come soon. Along with our gay/lesbian brothers and sisters we have waiting for our freedom since 1969. But also like our brothers and sisters, we are not willing to wait any longer.

In the next few weeks transgender political groups will be making key strategy decisions on what to do next. Many of those decisions will in fact hinge on whether see ourselves as having been suckered or befriended. There is still time for gay/lesbian political organizations to have input in the decision making process, but they had better do it quickly. The anger and frustration in our community is continuing to build, and time is running out.



What Revolution?

by Merissa Sherrill Lynn
Founder, IFGE

Atlanta Action '95 was billed as a leadership convention. It did indeed attract many of the transgendered community's leaders. It also attracted the rabble rousers and the in-your-face politicians. The hallways, the meeting rooms and lecterns reverberated from pleading voices crying out for ACTION! They called for us to "Stop the hatred, stop the violence!" They emphasized their pleas with tired rhetorical phrases such as, "We're sick and tired!" and "We're angry, and we're not going to take it any more!" They strengthened their cries by demonizing Pat Robertson, Rush Limbaugh, and Jessie Helms. They demonized all those who disagreed with them. Then they neatly tied their pleas and cries and rhetoric and condemnations together by loudly declaring that, "The revolution has begun!"

What revolution? Change a few names and places, and the same fiery rhetoric could have slipped from the mouths of Oliver Cromwell, Vladimir Lenin, Joseph Goebbels, Angela Davis, or Pastor Peters. There's no revolution, at least none that has a chance of succeeding. Oh sure, there's a chance a few short-term, short-sighted, self-serving political objectives can be achieved, but that isn't success.

Success is learning to respect each other's differences and learning how to live together. Success is learning that we are all part of something greater than ourselves, and acting accordingly. The truly successful revolutionaries did not run around telling people how angry or oppressed they were. They did not preach hatred or violence. They did not demonize their enemies, real or perceived.

Three of history's greatest revolutionaries were Jesus of Nazareth, Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King. Jesus talked of loving and forgiving
Summer 1995

ing our neighbors and transgressors. He could have preached religious intolerance, but he didn't, and he was successful. Gandhi spoke of respect and cooperative action, not only with our allies, but with our enemies. He could have demonized his enemies and preached violent revolution, but he didn't, and he was successful. King spoke of innate human dignity, and respect for others regardless of their race or creed. He could have preached racism and black power, but he didn't, and he was successful. (It's true, they were all murdered for their efforts, but the fear of death did not stop them, nor did their deaths make them less successful.) The true revolutionaries worked to change both the laws and people's minds and hearts, for they knew that one was no good without the other. It is painfully clear that we in the transgendered community have much to learn.

During the convention, the one recurring theme that bothered me most was how eager so many of us were to condemn the Religious Right. The reason for that was easy to understand. It was a regurgitation of the age-old tactic of creating a common enemy and gaining support by encouraging people to hate and fear that enemy.

So, here we are, trying to do to the Religious Right what we are accusing them of trying to do to us. Does anybody have any idea how we can learn to respect each other's differences and live together in an atmosphere like that? What made it absurdly funny was, here we were on one hand doing our best to condemn them, and on the other hand saying how important it was to get them to see the light. In other words, we're the good guys and they're the bad guys. We're right and they're wrong, and we've got to get them to see it our way. What unadulterated NONSENSE!

We're not always the good guys. They're not always wrong. Our point of view is not the only point of view. If we expect to accomplish anything, we must get off our righteous high horses, or if you prefer, our pompous rear-ends, and shut up and listen. If we do not listen, we will not understand. If we do not understand their issues, we have no hope of getting others to understand our issues.

In addition, we have no hope of winning people's hearts if we go out of our way to insult and alienate them. We have a wonderful example of that happening at Atlanta Action '95. Two of the transgender community's finest and most energetic leaders were at the convention. They also happened to be Christians, and members of both the Christian Coalition (CC) and the Focus on the Family (FOF). They were at the convention to build bridges not only between their organization (which happened to be Tri-Ess) and the rest of the transgender community, but between the transgender community and their Christian community. They gave us the opportunity to listen, to learn, to build bridges, and find ways to live together. What did we do? We went out of our way to insult and alienate them. We blew the damned bridges up! Stupid, stupid, stupid.

We can proclaim revolution all we want, but right now there is no revolution, at least none that I have any wish to support. If we are going to advocate a revolution, we would do well to carefully rethink the kind of revolution we want to advocate. Then, to make it happen, we need to shut up and listen. From listening comes understanding. From understanding comes respect. From respect comes the ability to make those compromises necessary to enable us to live together. Being able to live together is the revolution.

What Do You Do When You've Achieved All Your Goals?

by Jane Ellen Fairfax

Section top! 300 Masterpoints, with 25 Gold Points! For three years I had read to improve my game, asked advice, and played duplicate bridge several times a week. Now I had my Gold Card. I was a Life Master, the highest rank in bridge. How wonderful I felt!

For about three months. Then it hit me. Having accomplished my goals, I had no new barriers to hurdle. Somehow, I felt I had outgrown the masses striving for that gold card. To be as talented as Barry Crane or Paul Soloway was not within my reach. What else did I need to learn? I could play a hand, defend, and get to the right spot in the bidding. Besides, the squabbling at the table irritated me. Some people just took bridge too seriously. All those entry fees and books added up, too. It was time to go on to other things. And so, by degrees, I dropped away from the world of bridge, from a hobby that had given me much joy.

So many crossdressers perpetuate this same tragedy. How often do they accomplish their goals and then drop out of the community! Reading how-to columns, they improve their feminine self-image. From voice coaches they learn to modulate and inflect their voices like proper ladies. Finally, they are able to pass in public, to go out whenever and wherever they please. Suddenly, they begin to think condescendingly of their chapters as merely "bigger closets." Who needs yet another hair care symposium or makeover session? While they might not match the appearance of the girl of their fantasies, they are comfortable with who they are. "Ah, yes," they recall on reading of an emerging sister's struggles, "I was there once - long ago."

And they're ever mindful of the cost of living in the community: "Thirty-five dollars a year to be in Tri-Ess. And the chapter wants money, too. Now IFGE is into my pocket for a membership fee. You know, I could buy a nice dress with that money - maybe some earrings, too. And what do I need the magazines and directories for? My wife and I go out as two girls, and I've got sisters who will go out with me. Besides, everyone's got their knives into one another over philosophical stuff that means nothing to me. Who needs the hassle?" So they drop by the wayside - those who have accomplished, and those who think they've accomplished, what they desired. All of us are the worse off for their loss.

Thanks to three kind friends, I did not drop out of bridge. My beloved friend Joyce inspired me to use my love for teaching to help novice players. Two other friends, both expert players, taught me how little I really knew about bridge. When I play nowadays, I don't even know how many masterpoints I have. Every hand is different; one

never knows when a completely new situation will come up. Without struggle, or even realization of improvement, I'm getting better at the game. Learning the fine points and teaching others has made bridge even more fulfilling. Now I play, not for achievement of goals, but for the love of the game.

The same fulfillment is available for crossdressers. Probably no one needs Tri-Ess less than Virginia Prince. Virginia is a full-time crossdresser; she spends her whole life en femme. How easy would it have been, once she found her own peace, to go her way and leave the community! Had she done so, we would never have had her books of wisdom, nor would the far-flung gender community have flourished as it does now. But Virginia is always enrolled in that University of Life, looking for new insights and ways to help others.

Several years ago, JoAnn Roberts helped a crossdresser in her emergence. Later, grateful for JoAnn's gentle encouragement, the sister asked JoAnn how she could ever repay her. Replied JoAnn, "Help another crossdresser." Sisterly love and support are two gifts that keep on giving - not only for the new sister, but also for the giver of the gift. "I've outgrown you" is a statement of the ego; "I will help you" is an outpouring of the heart.

Staying involved will pay enormous dividends. Experienced crossdressers can yawn along at presentations on accessorizing, or they can listen and glean nuggets of information that will add a whole new dimension to their feminine image. They can moan about the cost of dues and publications, or they can witness the miracle of emergence, the miracle that never grows old. They can lock their knowledge smugly away, or they can share it with those in need. They can bewail the backbiting in our community, or be a voice for peace. They can bask in self-satisfaction, or they can emulate the heroines of history. There are some who don't need to crossdress anymore, who have fully integrated the masculine and feminine within themselves. For these there is the sweetest part of the crossdressing experience - crossdressing for artistic expression, for fun, "for the love of the game."



The Feminine Response in Times of CRISIS

by Frances Fairfax

We often talk of cultivating one's interior femininity, of improving upon our feminine qualities of caring, nurturing, gentleness, and consideration of others, as much as we strive to improve our exterior feminine image. Jane Ellen has spoken of this as "crossdressing the soul."

In the course of life we often encounter friends, relatives, neighbors and co-workers in the midst of crises and tragedies. Nothing brings this home quite like such overwhelming tragedies as the Oklahoma City bombing. We would like to comfort the hurting, help them in some way, express our sympathy; but we don't know what to say or how to say it. Here is a checklist of DO's and DON'T's adapted from What You Can Say...When You Don't Know What to Say by Lauren L. Briggs. (Harvest House Publishers, 1985)

DO respond in a timely manner with a card, a call, or a visit.

DON'T wait a long time before you make your initial contact.

DO offer simple, understanding statements such as: "I feel for you during this difficult time." "This must be very hard for you." "I share your feelings of loss." "I wish I could take the hurt away." Comments like these let the person know you acknowledge their pain and it's OK for them to feel that way.

DON'T try to minimize their pain with comments like: "It's probably for the best." "Things could be worse." "You'll remarry." "You're young - you can always have another one." "You're strong - you'll get over it soon." "You know God is in control." Comments like these might be an attempt to offer hope, but to a hurting person, they sound as though you don't comprehend the enormity of what's happened.



DO say, "I'm so sorry." Then add, "I know how special he was to you." "I'll miss her also." "I want to help you; I'm available anytime you need me." "I've been praying for you. Is there something specific I should be praying for?"

DON'T say, "I'm so sorry," and end the sentence. Your hurting friend is probably sorry, too, but he can't respond to that kind of comment.

DO be aggressive with your willingness to help. Ask yourself, "What would I need if I were in a similar situation?" Offer specific things you can do for them, such as, "I'm on my way to the store. What can I pick up for you?" "Would tomorrow be a good day to help you with the laundry?" "Would the children like to come over and play this afternoon?" Most of the time, a person in crisis can't decide what he does need. Besides, he probably doesn't want to impose.

DON'T just say, "Is there anything I can do to help?"

DO encourage them to keep a journal or write down their thoughts and feelings. Often, just seeing their thoughts on paper helps them deal with what they are facing.

DON'T say, "You shouldn't feel that way."

DO agree when the individual expresses her feelings. Say, "Yes, what happened to you isn't fair and doesn't make any sense," whether or not you share the same perspective.

DON'T offer spiritual answers as to why they're facing this problem, or tell them that they'll be stronger persons afterward. We don't know why tragedies happen, or why certain people have to go through such trauma. We do our friends a disservice by offering possible explanations.

DO allow them all the time they need to deal effectively with all the phases of their grief.

DON'T put timetables on your hurting friend's recovery. Your inference that they're not coping well or should be their old self by now only hinders their progress.

DO give spiritual encouragement from your heart, and include insights that have comforted you at a difficult time.

DON'T quote wise sayings or anything else as a way to correct or minimize their feelings. Think very carefully, asking yourself if a passage will communicate comfort or condemnation. Never offer spiritual suggestions from a position of superiority or self-righteousness.

DO consider what you can and would like to do. Be creative. Use your gifts and talents to help. Your willing spirit and creative efforts will comfort your hurting friend.

DON'T put yourself under pressure to perform tasks you really don't want to do.

DO be honest about your experiences. If you haven't endured their particular kind of tragedy, say, "I haven't been through what you're facing, but I want you to know I care about you and will support you through the difficult time ahead." If you have had a similar crisis, tell them about it briefly, adding that you can empathize with their feelings. Of course, you can't completely understand because you

haven't been through the past experiences that laid the foundation for their reaction.

DON'T say, "I understand," when you haven't faced the same situation. Telling someone that everything will be all right, when you have never known the depth of their hardship, is an empty statement. And they don't need to hear horror stories of people you know who have been through something similar.

DO continue keeping in touch, letting them know they're in your thoughts and prayers. Ask how they're really doing, and send thoughtful notes with encouraging words.

DON'T ignore their needs after the immediate crisis has subsided.

DO respond cautiously with uplifting and edifying ideas when friends ask for your help in their tragedy.

DON'T offer unasked-for advice. If they weren't solicited, your suggestions may not be appreciated.

DON'T be critical or judgmental. Don't say things like, "This wouldn't have happened if..."

DO provide long-term, unconditional support. Let them know that everyone deals with trauma in a different way. You have no expectations of how much time it should take or how they should behave. Assure them that whatever it takes, you'll be there with them through it all.

In My Opinion

by Denise

I live in a very interesting town. One of the people I work with came to me one day to ask if I had heard a rumor about another teacher and one of our custodians. She had heard it from her husband who had been told by one of the cooks. I told her that I had not heard this rumor and furthermore I couldn't believe that anyone could start something that could not only hurt both of these people, but also destroy their marriage, their reputations, and their families.

As I contemplated the words I had said to her, I remembered a time in my own life when I had once done this same thing. I was running away from my problems and instead of making my life better, I was destroying myself and my family and inviting more problems to come into my life.



I have made a lot of changes since that time and have found a certain peace in worrying about myself and my family. I still have many hills to climb and I know that with time I will succeed! I have found that if I work on myself everything else will take care of itself.

There are many forces working against our support groups. "Alone we will fail, together we will succeed". We must all work together to help our groups grow. I will never forget the love and friendship I felt from our chapter the first time I attended a meeting over a year ago. I would encourage any wife who still struggles with the issue of crossdressing, like I do from time to time, to come and feel the warmth and friendship their chapter has to offer.

I want to close with this thought a good friend has shared with me on many occasions. "When one thing in the universe changes, no matter how small, everything **MUST** change!" I intend to leave this world a better place because I was in it.

(Reprinted from Dresser News.)

Summer 1995

The River Of Life

by Vanessa Kaye, Chairwoman
Central Oklahoma Transgender Alliance



If you grew up in a rural area as I did, I am sure that you've seen small ponds or pools of water alongside a river. These come about in a number of ways. One of the most common is for the river to rise above its banks and flow over into adjacent low-lying areas. As the river level returns to normal, the pools remain behind, cut off from their life-giving source. As time goes by, the small pools of water grow heavy with scum and algae. There are usually no fish in these pools, now stagnant and decaying, while the River of Life flows nearby, full of life and vitality.

Sometimes life is like that. People dig little pools for themselves away from the swift current of life, and in those little pools, full of decay, they stagnate and die. Why do people dig such pools for themselves? The answers are many, but primarily it is because they seek a state of permanency in which all they know remains the same. They feel comfortable and safe in these pools. People in these comfortable pools slowly die as they watch life go swiftly by.

Life is not a stagnant pool. It is ever-flowing and ever-changing. Nothing is permanent, especially life. The constant and swift current of life is part
Summer 1995

of its enigmatic beauty. If we avoid being caught up in the current of life, we may entirely miss out on the joys and lessons it has to teach us.

Over the course of the last few years, many detractors, and some Tri-Ess members, have accused Tri-Ess of becoming a pool alongside the banks of the Transgender River. It has appeared to many that Tri-Ess does little to attract new members, it isn't innovative, and that the organization shies away from controversial topics, such as sexuality. I, too, had begun to feel that Tri-Ess lacked vitality. So, I felt moved to address a few points.

Tri-Ess, like any other organization is comprised of people. I realized that it wasn't the organization digging this safe little pool alongside the Transgender River, it was her members. The members of Tri-Ess are responsible for not only failing to challenge the organization, but for allowing Tri-Ess to have an image of being a stagnant pool. While ensuring their "safe" pools of social clubs, and losing sight of the main purpose of a support group, many members have cut their chapters off from the life-giving currents.

Attracting new members is the responsibility of all members, not just those at the top. An increase in membership for the sake of numbers is meaningless. If we have something to offer both as a local and as a national organization, there will be responses. Chapters must meet the needs of members and potential members in their local communities. If a group responds to the needs of local members and develops or is involved in outreach programs, new members will come. The national organization should be more active than they are in supporting chapters and providing assistance; however, I am sure that help will come when the need is made known.

Tri-Ess can be innovative when approached with a new idea. When I was working to bring C.O.T.A. (The Central Oklahoma Transgender Alliance) to life, many sisters warned me, "Tri-Ess will never go along with that idea." Yet, in truth, it was Tri-Ess who helped to establish this new community. Not only did Tri-Ess pledge its help, but the Chairwoman herself became personally involved with this new alliance that joins Tri-Ess, Renaissance and AEGIS to provide a comprehensive transgender support organization.



Vanessa Kaye

The Femme Mirror

I challenged the editors of the Femme Mirror for ignoring that sexuality and crossdressing are interrelated for many gender-gifted people. I asked them why they didn't print articles on this topic. I was quite surprised at their response, "If someone would send one in," they said, "we'd be thrilled to print it. But nobody seems to contribute such articles." There it was again, the responsibility for Tri-Ess appearing to be cut-off from the life giving waters of the Transgender River should be directed to her members and not just the leaders alone.

There are other aspects of transgenderism that Tri-Ess should acknowledge and be more active in them. Yet, Tri-Ess is so designed as to respond to the needs of her members, not to anticipate those needs. All of us - members, officers and friends of Tri-Ess - are responsible for keeping this organization alive. We should not, and cannot allow Tri-Ess to become a stagnant, dying pool of water separated from the mainstream of the transgender community.

To fulfill this responsibility we must constantly challenge ourselves in terms of being open and honest with both our feelings and our needs. Moreover, we must challenge Tri-Ess or any support groups we belong to, to meet those needs.

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So You Are Single!

by: Dr. Jaye

Yes! Single transgendered people have many of the same feelings and cares commonly found among those who are in a traditional marriage or a "relationship" arrangement with a member of the opposite sex. Besides, single transgendered people have another feeling set which has been growing increasingly in the last few years, especially in Tri-Ess. This set of feelings, anxiety, frustration, and rejection, is associated with an overall feeling of being left out.

Let us set forth straight away, we think the emphasis in Tri-Ess on families and especially the spousal relationship between married crossdressers and those who love them is especially important. It is a foundation of great vitality and fundamental importance. Tri-Ess leadership and publications have rightly focused on it and brought it to the forefront. Transgendered people are not the stereotypical social rejects those who would condemn all who are "different" love to depict them as being. By setting forth an emphasis on the family and especially on the vitality of the wives and partners as being of fundamental importance, Tri-Ess has taken a course of action which clearly moves all transgendered people closer to the mainstream of society. Still.....

Yes, there remains the caveat, "still." Still, the needs of single transgendered people are there. Still the transgendered single needs to be addressed and served. So, what are the things Tri-Ess and especially the Femme Mirror can do to address and serve the needs of the single transgendered individual?

In our last issue, this column asked this question and asked for input from single transgendered individuals. This is being written on 1 June 1995, well in advance of this edition's publication date, which is a necessity due to the lead time in getting the magazine together, laid out, and published—not a minor operation by any means. To date, we have received three letters in response Summer 1995

to our request for input. While these are certainly helpful, they aren't enough.

Oh yes, it is far easier to gripe, to complain, to whine and find fault when things are not going our way. After all, we are human and to do those things rather than set our minds to work making suggestions for improvements. It is oh so easy simply to gripe, complain, whine and find fault. But, whining, complaining, griping and finding fault do no good. Taking the time, spending the energy, and dedicating at least some minor personal resource is necessary if each of us really desires to have Tri-Ess and especially the Femme Mirror provide better service to us.

"Put up or shut up."

The point in bringing up the paucity of response to our request for input and contrasting it to the common human tendency to gripe, complain, whine, and find fault is to set forth a challenge to all the single transgendered people who read these lines: put up or shut up. It is grossly unfair for us to wait in the wings for our leadership to think of all the needs and formulate programs to address those needs. Remember, if you will, those in leadership roles in Tri-Ess and in other similar organizations as well, are VOLUNTEERS. They don't get paid. Most don't even get their expenses, incurred in serving us, reimbursed. They need the help of all members, and this means YOU.

To tell or not to tell...

To tell or not to tell is truly one of the single transgendered person's most pressing problems. There is no standard answer, of course. Still, it is the contention of this writer, the honest and fair thing to do is to tell. Tell, and do it early in the acquaintanceship stage of getting to know someone. To do otherwise, we believe, is grossly dishonest and unfair to the other party. Hiding a transgendered self is living a lie and seeking to achieve gain by false pretense.

These are hard words, yes. Still, they are honest and leave nothing to misinterpretation regarding what this author believes is the right and proper thing to do in relation to dealing with members of the opposite sex.

Passing...

Another issue which comes up often in discussion among single transgendered people is the ever present concern: passing and going out in public while crossdressed. Let's face facts. There are some who simply look wonderful and easily can come and go completely undetected. At the other extreme, some of us have such powerful male features the best we could ever aspire to do is appear as a "man in a dress." In the broad middle (and most of us are broad in the middle, incidentally) are those for whom passing can be achieved with considerable effort.

Going out in public while dressed is a function of many variables. Passing is only one of the variables. Desire is another. Feasibility is another. The question: "Is the out in public adventure worth the effort?" persists. Another variable is addressed by the question: "Is the out in public adventure worth the risk?" For each individual the answers to these questions and the considerations given these variables is a unique set of considerations. There is no one "right" answer. For some, dressing in private only is both appropriate and satisfying. For others, getting out and being accepted as a member of the opposite sex is both appropriate and satisfying.

"...no one right answer..."

As we said, there is no one "right" answer universally applicable to all single transgendered individuals in regard to going out in public, passing, etc. The unique answer applicable to the individual MUST be respected. One of the problems commonly found among single transgendered individuals, and

in some cases among married ones as well, is the tendency of some individuals to think because they do something such as work crossdressed, shop crossdressed, etc. then all others must do the same or something is wrong with them. This is pure nonsense and displays shallow thinking along with a failure to respect the uniqueness and individual liberty of the others involved.

If you are a single crossdresser and if you have concerns which are not being addressed adequately by Tri-Ess and the Mirror, then we do want to hear from you. We don't just want to hear griping, whining, complaining, and the like. We want to know what you think needs to be done at the very top level of Tri-Ess, and what those of us who write in the Mirror can do directly to make the services of Tri-Ess address your needs more directly. Don't just sit back and take pot-shots. Get involved in making Tri-Ess what it needs to be.

Disclaimer

The opinions and views expressed in the Femme Mirror are those of the respective contributors and do not necessarily represent the views or official policies of The Society for the Second Self, its Officers and Board Members.

Letters to the Editor

Dear Donna,

Thank you for responding to my letter and sending me my new membership card. I am proud to be a member, in my fifth year, of Tri-Ess.

I carry my membership card in my billfold to remind me of my desire to dress in feminine clothing. I have had some of my close friends ask me what this card means and my response is always "I am a member of an organization that promotes public education about those of us who are heterosexual crossdressers. It is also a resource for support to those of us who are crossdressers."

Not very many people know that I am a crossdresser because I am still in the closet. Many of my friends suspect that I am a crossdresser because my hair is "shoulder blade" length and I have pierced ears. I always wear my long hair in a pony tail when I am out in public and I always wear ear rings, whether they be diamond studs, hoops or the hook type. I have a fetish for ear rings so I have many pairs of them. Since long hair is becoming more popular for men these days, and more men are wearing ear rings, I don't get as many weird looks as I used to five years ago.

I enjoy reading the Femme Mirror very much, and I always read it from cover to cover the day that I receive it. I have learned a lot about crossdressing through Tri-Ess and I believe in this organization. I am convinced that us crossdressers are far better off today because of the continuing efforts of the members of Tri-Ess to educate the general public about us.

I appreciate your efforts to keep the membership records on track and I know that it must take a lot of effort on your part as well as a lot of your spare time. Keep up the good work.

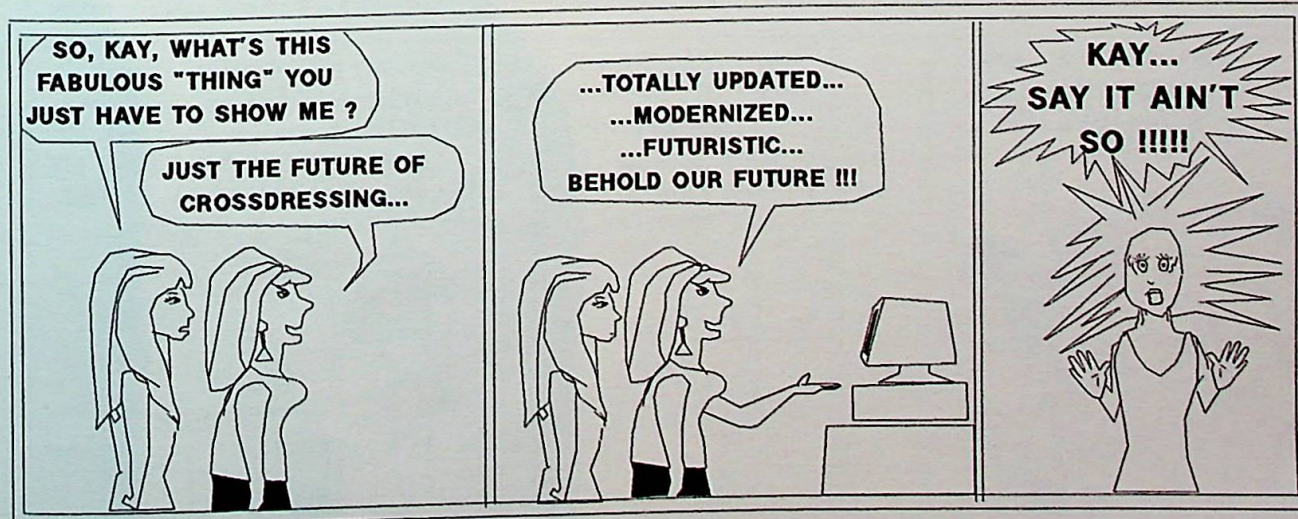
Sincerely,
Liana

ED.NOTE: Thank you, Donna, for sending this letter on to us, and for keeping those membership records on track. And thanks to you, Liana, for the kind words about the Mirror and Tri-Ess. It's great to see Tri-Ess PRIDE!

- Frances

CD

By Sherri Belmar





Dear sisters and brothers,

I thank God for Tootsie, Robin Williams, Terence Stamp, Ed Wood, Arnold Schwarzeneger and all the other actors that having proven their masculinity were not afraid of appearing feminine and vulnerable in front of millions of spectators.

It is obvious that we are getting close to achieving "critical mass." I hope most of you are acquainted with the concepts of the "Aquarian Conspiracy" and the story of the "hundredth monkey." (If you are not, I'll be delighted to expand in the next issue.)

The fact as it applies to us, is that if enough people out there get used to the idea of seeing men dressed as women without "freaking out," soon we will begin to be accepted without so much fuss.

As we continue the efforts through television and the press, with the wonderful support of all these movies that seem to keep coming out (Mixed Nuts, etc.), we will achieve the breakthrough

within our lifetime, hopefully before we get too old to enjoy it! How about declaring something like the "crossdressers day" or "day of the gender gifted," and we all go out wherever we are in the country, dressed as our femme selves?

I am a professional in the fine art business and quite experienced in marketing and performing arts. I live in Hawaii and our community here is very limited. I invite each and all of you to give me your comments or feedback. I am willing to put some energy in this project.

Please write to:
Christina Janes
P O Box 10524
Lahaina, Maui, HI 96761

EDNOTE: Yes, we are much closer to achieving "critical mass" in terms of public acceptance, if not in complete civil rights protection. By all means, let's have comments and feedback on how best to achieve our goals. Sisters?
-Frances

Editorial Policy

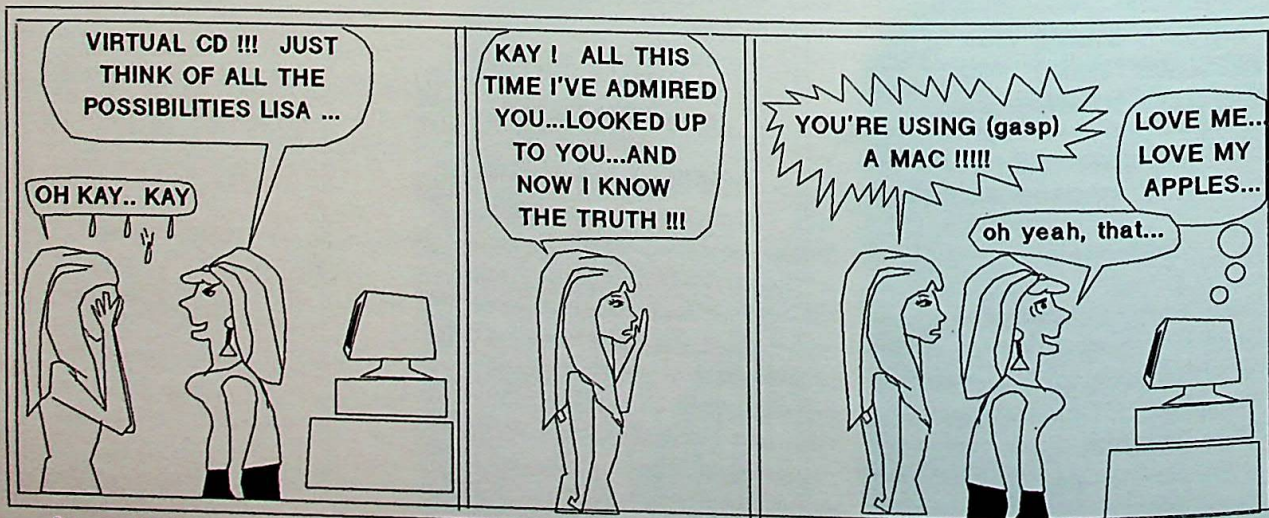
The FEMME MIRROR will not publish any material that bashes any crossgendered person or support organization, nor will it publish any ad hominem argument.

Dear Donna,

Thank you for reminding me that my membership has expired. I am currently living in England and have joined a support group here, The Beaumont Society. I go to their monthly meeting in Cambridge, and have made a few good friends there. I have learned a lot from being involved with support groups and from meeting other crossdressers and transsexuals. I think that keeping my name on the inactive roster is probably the best for now. The dues for The Beaumont Society are equal to about \$50 annually and are currently due. I have not yet decided if I wish to remain a member and have not renewed. I don't know how much longer my employer will need me here.

I have also come to understand that I don't wish to live this lifestyle as openly as I probably should. I have been out to my family for three years now and they have accepted my cross-dressing and we can talk about it openly. I have also come out to one of my co-workers who has been a good friend for several years. Since I am not in the service but employed as a civilian, this is not a problem.

I have also had a good deal of counseling to help learn and understand what I am dealing with. I have been taking Prozac for about the last 6 months to help deal with cognitive dissonance associated with being transgendered. I have found that this medication has given me a great deal of relief. I am also aware now that these episodes of cogni-



tive dissonance are directly related to chronic melancholia (depression). It seems that the more depressed I am, the more frequent the episodes of cognitive dissonance are, hence, the more I need to crossdress. By treating the depression I am freed from need to crossdress so often. I still do crossdress, but I have learned that going full-time is not necessarily the only way to treat transgenderism.

I am somewhat disappointed in having had to learn this the hard way. It is more obvious to me now that crossdressing is more of a medical problem than most medical professionals wish to realize. My coming to this understanding on my own at a good deal of expense and emotional distress leaves me with a sense of incongruity of the purpose and help that Tri-Ess can offer. Having medical professionals involved in Tri-Ess has not resulted in this being well known.

There have been very few articles ever written about treating transgenderism or gender dysphoria with anti-anxiety or anti-depression medications. Perhaps there are others who have realized what I have come to realize. But, I haven't met any, and when I discuss my taking anti depression medication with post-op or pre-op transsexuals, the subject is met with a good deal of distaste. At least I am not in denial about what the real nature of what I am dealing with.

I certainly have been through a lot these last three years trying to sort this all out. Perhaps, had I not got involved

with Alpha-Zeta and Tri-Ess I would still be living a miserable life in the closet. I can still enjoy cross-dressing, even though I take medication to prevent the cognitive dissonance from being so overwhelming. I would otherwise be living my life as a female and always be in denial as to the real nature of the problem. Maybe more information like my story should be shared with others before they make an irrevocable decision.

- Connie (SERV-3692-L)

ED.NOTE: Thank you, Connie, for writing. We hope you do rejoin so you can stay in communication with your sisters in Tri-Ess. You raise many good points. Crossdressing as a means of relieving anxiety and depression is not in itself harmful. If there is crippling dysfunction, treating anxiety and depression by chemical means, under the care of a competent physician, is certainly recommended. We certainly wish to see crossdressing as part of the solution, rather than a problem, but we also realized that it is not a solution that "works" for every individual in every situation. For some, psychiatric medication may indeed seem to be the much-sought-after "Magic Pill" that makes the desire to crossdress go away.

The point is that transgenderism itself does not equal pathological dysfunction. Obviously, some transgendered persons are dysfunctional, and some dysfunctional persons happen to be transgendered. Transgendered and transsexual persons may very well resent and reject the idea of a medical treatment that reduces the desire for crossgender expression. There are

The Femme Mirror many other factors at work here, including peer pressure, but the fact remains there are some who would benefit from a course of medication, giving them a breathing space in which to contemplate alternatives. The idea does seem to have been little studied, and certainly little reported in transgender community media. In fairness to the medical professionals associated with Tri-Ess, however, most are not psychiatrists.

In the past there have been letters and articles in the Mirror dealing with medical treatments. Several years ago a researcher sought volunteers to take a drug considered helpful in treatment of obsessive-compulsive disorders. Some members did write later to describe their participation in the project. It seems that the medication did remove the desire to crossdress. However, it also removed the desire to do much of anything else. And, the medication was a "big gun" psychiatric drug that could not be taken indefinitely without risk of serious side effects.

In summary, transgendered persons who experience great discomfort or dysfunction associated with their crossgender expression should perhaps consider medication, at least for short-term relief. It could provide a window of opportunity for dealing with particular problems.

We would certainly like to see more scientific articles on this subject. Readers, if you are aware of any, or have a personal experience to relate, please consider sharing this with your sisters. We need to know all the options when making life decisions.

- Frances



Tucked into the Spring 1995 issue of the Femme Mirror was a nice letter from Jane Ellen. The purpose of the letter was to solicit funds so that Tri-Ess could purchase a countoured display board. This would be the same type of display board which was used effectively at the First International Congress on Gender Research in Los Angeles. For those who were not at the Congress, or are not familiar with this type of portable display, please refer to pages 22 and 23 of the Spring 1995 Femme Mirror.

Many felt this display board would be an asset to Tri-Ess at the Congress. That's why Carol Beecroft drove from Tulare to Sunnyvale twice to meet with the vendor, Skyline Displays. Each trip was a 400 mile journey. That is why we went the third time, to actually rent the board. That is why we spent two days creating the artwork for the display, after we had spent one day driving around to locate materials.

Tri-Ess rented the display at a cost of \$250. The cost to us, to prepare that display, and to get it to the working location, was far in excess of the \$250 rental fee paid by Tri-Ess. We are not asking to be reimbursed, but it might have been a nice gesture if we had been recognized for our initial vision, time and expense which we jointly incurred in an effort to bring this idea to fruition.

Many people have no idea what it is to spend four solid days plus several

hundred dollars of your own money developing an idea which would bring publicity and great prestige to Tri-Ess. But we were glad to do this - all for the greater glory of Tri-Ess.

Although our efforts in this project seemed to be ignored in the last issue of the Femme Mirror, we were delighted at the successful outcome of this venture.

Respectfully yours,

Carol Beecroft
Diana Beck (CA-3048-B)

ED.NOTE: Sorry! We didn't know the Tri-Ess display board at the Congress represented such an extraordinary effort on your part. We're glad you told us about it, and we certainly do commend you. It was a great idea, very professional, and very well received by the Congress participants. Having personally observed the IFGE's display board "in action" at other conventions, Jane Ellen encouraged Carol to proceed with the Tri-Ess display at the Congress, and launched the campaign to purchase such a board for Tri-Ess's future use. That campaign has raised over \$1200 by press time, enough to purchase a quality display. Please see the article and list of donors elsewhere in this issue. Once again, thanks for bringing the "inside story" to our attention.

- Frances

Dear Donna,

I am always delighted to pay my dues to Tri-Ess. Tri-Ess has been such a help for me. If it wasn't for the Society for the Second Self, I would probably still be lonely, hiding in the closet (literally). If not that, then I probably would have blown my brains out.

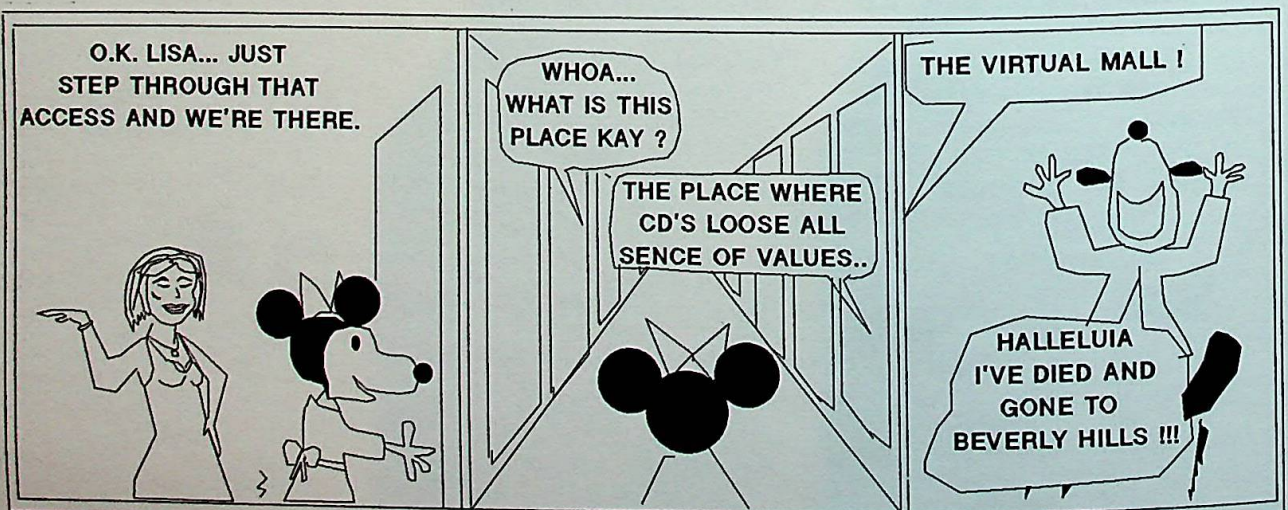
I would have not know the thrill and joy of feeling the wind up my skirt, and the sun on my face (Kathleen's). If Tri-Ess had not been exclusively for heterosexual males, I probably would have thought that it was a bunch of sick, strange, perverted individuals. I would not have learned and received so much love and understanding from my sisters.

I have learned so much about myself, about crossdressers, and about my transsexual and gay brothers and sisters. I know there is much more to learn, and with the help of my sisters at Tri-Ess, I will grow and become more comfortable (and braver) with my femme self.

I could go on and on, but I better get my dues mailed in before I find out I'm overdue.

With all my love,
Kathleen Renee' (WA-3758-D)

ED.NOTE: Thanks for the kind words, Kathleen. What a day-brightener! We're all glad Donna sent it along to us here at the Mirror.



Chapter News Update

by Jane Ellen Fairfax



California

DATELINE: LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

Not even the California monsoon was able to keep the ladies of Alpha Chapter away. Perhaps it was because Melanie Y., President of the Neutral Corner Support Group of San Diego, came up to Los Angeles to share ideas and friendship from Neutral Corner. An apostle of community among all crossgendered support groups, Melanie stressed the need for communication and cooperation. In her talk she expressed the thought that Tri-Ess has much to offer Neutral Corner. In any event, Neutral Corner was going to find out! Kathy, President of Alpha Chapter, completed the "cultural exchange" by driving down to San Diego to speak with her colleagues at Neutral Corner.

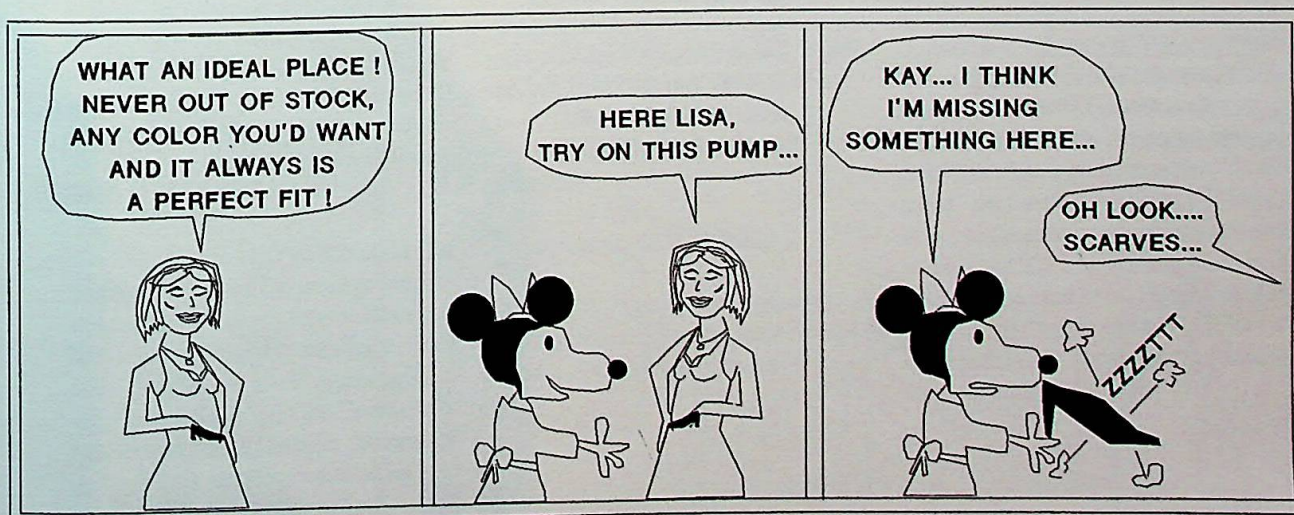
Three Alpha sisters got quite a surprise on a recent shopping foray. After a lovely lunch, they hit the mall, fully realizing that three crossdressers together was "a visit to Read City." While looking over a cute little number in a dress shop, a sales clerk came over and asked whether one of them was named Michelle. "Someone", she said, "named Michelle had called and asked about trying on a dress. That broke the ice! One of the Alpha sisters wound up buying a "cute little dress." Michelle had blazed the trail for them. The really strange thing about the whole episode is that of the three crossdressers, none was named Michelle.

The May meeting of Alpha Chapter saw an unusual appearance of Virginia as Charles! The guest of honor was an electrologist, Layla, who instructed the ladies of Alpha about electrolysis and toasted Virginia. After a short break, President Kathy H. led a discussion on voice. Perhaps it was this which inspired Charlene D. to write an excellent article, "Fitting Into the Feminine Culture." The most obvious methods are dressing so as not to be noticed and modulating one's voice. To Charlene this answer wasn't quite complete. The insight came to her that the

operative words are "act ladylike." "To be ladylike", Charlene believes, "is to be courteous and well-mannered, and to deport oneself in a way that reflects good upbringing." Think of the little things that women wouldn't do: slurp their soup, slouch in a chair; speak in a raucous manner... These things are easy to correct. Many of them will also apply to your brother. When I try to act ladylike I find it reinforces my feeling of femininity, which affects my action and makes me even more comfortable in my femininity. In her article, "Transwordism", Stacey defines insight as a deep furrow on mature understanding. Excellent insight, Charlene!

A final bit of crossdressing wisdom from Janyne:

"The only thing that separates us from the animals is our ability to accessorize."





Ohio

**DATELINE:
CLEVELAND, OHIO**

Alpha Omega Chapter of Tri-Ess really ought to be located in Utah. If these ladies are not in the Beehive State, they are certainly the beehive chapter. Lori has gotten up a Message Center number: 216-556-0067. Kathleen is working on getting the library onto computer. Recently the chapter became officially registered as a non-profit corporation in the state of Ohio. Diane has updated the information about Alpha Omega in TAPESTRY. The General Affairs Committee is busily working on an introductory package for new members - to include information on crossdressing, the Chapter Constitution and Bylaws, and a flow chart. Tanya and Deborah did a wonderful job on the new Chapter Information Brochure. As a tuneup for its new outreach program, the chapter got business cards which will contain the group's address and the Message Center phone number.

Not only are these ladies working apace on revitalizing their chapter, they are working to become a flagship chapter in the Tri-Ess community and a

leading group in the community at large. This fall they will firmly inaugurate their Tri-Ess Officers' Night, at which a Tri-Ess International officer will present the program. Alpha Omega was one of two chapters to contribute to the Tri-Ess National Outreach Display Fund. After discussion by their Board of Directors, the chapter named Diane as Representative to the Congress of Transgendered Organizations.

Yes, things are being accomplished at Alpha Omega - mostly because many, many sisters are becoming involved. Gloria Fenton put it well when she said, "Alpha Omega is a team and each of us is a member of that team. We have some high goals to achieve, and I know we can and will do it as a team. So, let's all dig in and put a shoulder in there and cheer like crazy for the team!" Truly, as Gloria says, "the best is yet to begin."

One of the more praiseworthy features of Alpha Omega Chapter is the highly visible involvement of the wives. Lori, Chair of the Interview Committee, reported that female attendance was 34.4%. An astounding statistic and one of which Alpha Omega should truly be proud! Not only are wives attending, but they are heavily involved. Cheryl is always contributing lively columns and tasty recipes in the "Silhouette." Elaine has been the long-term Secretary/Treasurer and Kathleen has been involved in a variety of works, wherever she is needed. Also gratifying was to read that Gloria's parents attended a recent Alpha Omega meeting. Alpha Omega is rapidly coming to exemplify the Tri-Ess vision in action!

If we are to be accepted as feminine people, we need to identify with women themselves - their issues and their feelings. In honor of National Women's History Month, chapter President Charlotte M. made a presentation called "Promises to Keep." Charlotte states, "If it were not for the women who didn't just sit back and let society place restraints on them, we would not have had a chance to come out of the closet for our rights and acceptance." In her presentation, Charlotte recounted the actions bold and visionary women took to improve their lot. "We have promises to keep to these women, to ourselves and future generations. Promises to live a life of principle and purpose to achieve, to be counted, to speak and be heard." Each of these women's lives - the actions they took and the purposes they kept alive - expands the possibilities for our own lives. The courage and determination of women from our shared past can inspire each of us to make and keep promises to build a stronger, better tomorrow.

As we celebrate National Women's History Month, let us join with the other women, men, girls and boys across the land who are honoring women by telling their stories and while we are honoring them, let us remember that we, too, have work to do, actions to take, and PROMISES TO KEEP. A copy of Charlotte's speech and the biography of the women featured were entered into the Alpha Omega Chapter library. There they will serve as role models in the feminine development we all seek. Well said, Charlotte!





Florida

family-oriented social gatherings. It says right here that this relatively new chapter is one to watch. Not only does it have strong leadership and a clear purpose, but it also represents the new breed of Tri-Ess chapter - very community-oriented and very enthusiastic about networking throughout the Tri-Ess system.

DATELINE: TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA

Every time Petra Dawn gets up on her "Soapbox", good things happen! Tau Lambda Chi Chapter has offered to become a co-sponsor of Southern Comfort Convention. Having read about the dramatic emergence of the Central Oklahoma Community (COTA), Petra and her colleagues at Tau Lambda Chi are investigating the possibility of forming a similar community in the Florida Panhandle. They proposed the name PANTRA, "PANhandle TRAnsgender Alliance", or PANTHA, "PANhandle Transgender Help Alliance."

Under this community arrangement, the alliance would be a single umbrella group under which Tau Lambda Chi would continue to operate as a Tri-Ess chapter. A provision, however, would be made for a transsexual support group and an open group as soon as these needs become manifest. "By being activist in our outreach and support to the broader community", declares Petra, we can maintain our own niche, but also nurture other groups to form for others in the community." Petra is already talking up this idea in cyberspace. This writer, for one, hopes such a community can come to pass! The time for rivalry and territory-claiming among crossgendered people is long over.

The ladies of Tau Lambda Chi continue to use an informal governing structure rather than a formal hierarchy. While having regular meetings every other month, they will organize road trips to be held around the Florida Panhandle and South Georgia. Several of the members also expressed an interest in exploring en homme activities such as picnics and nearby parks or other



Utah

DATELINE: SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH

From our Alpha Rho Chapter in Utah come the following six simple tips to gain respect, courtesy of C.R. Snyder, Clinical Psychologist:

1. Listen more than you talk. The more you talk, the more chance you will have of saying something foolish. So be silent when possible, and people will assume you are more intelligent than you are.
2. Maintain your private mystique. Be stingy with personal information and don't make your life an open book. Bearing your soul causes others to lower their opinion of you.
3. Don't downplay your accomplishments. Be modest, but proud when someone says, "That was great." Agree, and then say, "Thanks, I worked hard."
4. Admit mistakes quickly and gracefully.
5. Break the alibi habit.
6. Don't be a crowd-pleaser. If you try too hard to impress, people sense it, and you lose respect.



Oklahoma

DATELINE: OKLAHOMA CITY, OK

COTA (Center Oklahoma Transgender Alliance) had its first unity meeting, a picnic held at facilities of the United Life Church. As the food table was being set up, a couple came up and inquired whether the event was part of a wedding. Some of the leaders in attendance took a look at the wedding invitation, and, sure enough, the time of day and place were the same. The only problem was that they were there a week early!

In a further display of unity, the Mu Sigma Chapter of Tri-Ess came over from Memphis and Arkansas to help in the celebration. Those in attendance from Mu Sigma included Robyn, Nicole, Suzanne, Linda, Jacque, and Rhoni. This sort of good neighborliness can only build our community. An event such as this, as well attended as this one was, will certainly get the Oklahoma community off to a rousing start!

The transition from the non-focused "original" group to a full-service transgender community has gone extremely smoothly. All three groups, the Sigma Beta Chapter of Tri-Ess; Oklahoma Diversity, a Renaissance affiliate; and a transsexual focused group, OK New Men and Women, are now established and meeting. The "newsletter" truly reflects the entire community, with articles by Shannon and Vanessa of Tri-Ess, JoAnn Roberts of Renaissance, and Dallas Denny of AEGIS. Congratulations ladies! The entire transgender community is rooting for your success!



New York

**DATELINE:
BUFFALO, NEW YORK**

Louella, wife of a member of the Buffalo Belles, has established a hotline for wives and partners of crossdressers. She admits that she does not have all the answers, but does have some experience with being married to a crossdresser. Thank you very much for your work of love and support, Louella. This writer hopes your hotline is a source of comfort to many.

From Buffalo also come some excellent tips on how to wear plaids. Plaids can be beautiful, with their variegated shades. Although these cool weather classics are very stylish, matching can create some problems. A white shirt definitely does not go. A nondescript upper half will cause the plaid pattern to over-emphasize the bottom, thus calling attention to every figure imperfection, such as a thick waist, wide hips or short legs. A plaid shirt is also wrong unless the shirt has been especially designed to coordinate with the skirt. A solid shirt with a plaid collar that exactly matches the skirt is a beautiful match! A patterned shirt generally is the perfect match. Pinstripes, geometric or subtle floral prints that include one of the colors in the skirt, will balance the whole look and draw the ensemble together.

Summer spills can create permanent patterns in our wardrobe. How do we get these stains out? Here are some answers for some of the common stainers:

For mustard or catsup dab the stained area with a dry clearing solvent such as Carbona. Red wine, coffee, tea or soy sauce will respond to patting with a damp cloth containing a small

Summer 1995

amount of dishwashing liquid. Afterwards, a thorough rinsing will usually get rid of the stain. For stubborn stains dilute white vinegar (1 teaspoon per cup of water) followed by a rinse will usually restore the original appearance. Salad dressings, oils and mayonnaise respond to light dabbing with a dry cleaning solvent directly on the stain, followed by drying. If the spot remains, a solution of one teaspoon of ammonia to a cup of tap water will restore order. For chocolate, egg, milk or blood, dip the area in cold water and then blot with a small amount of enzyme detergent such as Wisk or Era and then rinse. If the spot remains, the dilute ammonia solution cited above should work. After treating any stain, immediately clean the garment to prevent hidden traces of the stain from oxidizing and turning brown.

From Nu Phi Chi also come excellent tips on avoiding shrinkage. Natural fabrics such as wool or cotton are most likely to shrink. These fabrics are woven by being stretched or straightened. After exposure to heat, these fibers have a tendency to curl back up and shrink to their original unstretched state. Synthetic fibers, on the other hand, such as polyester, nylon and acrylic are more likely to stay the same size, since they are manufactured to withstand heat. Those worried about shrinkage should buy fashions with tags that say "prewashed" or "superwashed", which mean that the garment has already been washed a few times. On wool items, a "woolmark" guarantees that the fabric will not shrink if it is laundered correctly. Even if natural fabrics have been preshrunk, however, most will shrink about 5% further when washed.



New Jersey

**DATELINE:
RIVER EDGE, NEW JERSEY**

The ladies of Chi Delta Mu Chapter kicked off the recent quarter with a huge gathering to hear JoAnn Roberts speak on "When to Tell Your Spouse." Over 40 members, spouses, partners and guests were on hand and fired many insightful questions at the speaker.

On May 5 to May 7, the Rainbow Mountain Resort ran their first crossdressing weekend ever! Many years ago Lynda, President of Chi Delta Mu Chapter, and her wife Marilyn had fallen in love with the Rainbow Resort and dreamed of having an event like this. They shared their dream with Barry Gruber, the manager. He was willing to give it a try. At the event, however, his feeling was, "Let's do it again - and soon." The ladies are already marking their calendars for a weekend in November, when they will again enjoy a weekend at the Rainbow Mountain Resort.



Florida

**DATELINE:
ORLANDO, FLORIDA**

They came, they shared, they conquered people's hearts! Alice and Anne recently appeared on a radio talk show hosted by Erin Summers of Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Two more winsome goodwill ambassadors for Tri-Ess and the gender community could not have been found! Nor could they have been facilitated by more sympathetic talk show hostess! In a just-about-flawless two hour session, these three ladies covered crossdressing from just about every angle imaginable, from choice of femme name to selecting lingerie to discussing crossgender expression with family and friends. Poignant was Alice's description of her 15 years of wedded happiness with her accepting wife, who died of a form of cancer, leaving Alice a widow. Everyone who listened could feel the powerful love between this

couple who had discovered the way to include crossdressing in building their relationship. Alice and Anne stressed strongly the need for crossdressers to educate helping professionals so that they can better work with those who include crossgender expression as an integral part of their lives. Throughout the show, Erin Summers mentioned the Phi Epsilon Mu and Tri-Ess hotline numbers. Among the conventions cited were the Holiday EnFemme, with its many educational programs and fun outings, and S.P.I.C.E. with its special emphasis on the needs of wives.

Most of the callers asked very sensible and insightful questions. One lady wanted to know what Alice and Anne felt as crossdressers. Both replied with variations of the idea that crossgender expression simply feels right for them and gives them a feeling of peace and fulfillment. Toward the end of the show there was one hot potato. Someone called in complaining that her husband had started to crossdress and eventually died of AIDS. Miss Summers quickly handled that one herself by pointing out that the value of crossdressing depends on what one does with it. Complimented for their stylish hairdos, ladylike clothes and deportment, Alice and Anne projected an image of comfort with who they are. It is not surprising to this writer that the audience treated them as winners. For that is exactly what they are! Congratulations Alice and Anne! Your chapter and your International are so proud of you!

These ladies are only two examples of the class people that make up Phi Epsilon Mu. Whenever I get down in the dumps, I simply pick up the newsletter of this noble chapter. Perhaps I will enjoy accounts such as Lolita's write up of the Saudi Arabian scene, or maybe I will feel the warmth from Kelly's efforts at a membership drive or her new idea for an updated Tri-Ess membership card. Heartwarming also is the continued strong support this writer personally feels when her letters to the chapter are published, when the chapter sends a wife to S.P.I.C.E. and when it makes a large contribution to the Tri-Ess Outreach Display Fund. Whether it be Stately Ladies Out on the Town, or couples writing "care ads" to their sis-

ters, or Vanessa's little crossdresser quiz, there is fun all over the place at Phi Epsilon Mu. It doesn't get any better than this!



Texas

DATELINE: HOUSTON, TEXAS

Community and activism were the theme words for the last quarter at Tau Chi Chapter. In May the three groups in the Houston community, Tau Chi Chapter of Tri-Ess; the Gulf Coast Transgender Community; and the Texas Association of Transsexuals gathered together at the Flagship Hotel over the Gulf of Mexico in Galveston, Texas. About 40 people came together for Dr. Peggy Rudd's new book signing to and partake of 6 foot long submarine sandwiches and Jane Fairfax's surprise birthday cake. The sun glinting over the water, it was easy to think we were all on board another Dignity Cruise.

The following month the Tau Chi Chapter meeting was a wine and cheese reception at the Transgen Legal Conference. During the conference, Drs. Peggy Rudd and Jane Fairfax participated in panel discussions. Since the rest of Peggy's panel did not show up, Melanie and Peggy presented together an absolutely thorough program on outreach. Can you imagine "radical" Martina Rothblatt, "moderate radical" Phyllis Frye, and "conservative" Jane Fairfax on the same panel? Well, it happened and it was a lovefest! The theme of the panel discussion was that we should accept one another's lifestyle choices. The Transgen Conference was a triumph for Phyllis Frye, a triumph in which Tri-Ess shared. Phyllis' coalition had drafted several resolutions on inclusion of transgendered persons in the gay and lesbian movement. All passed unanimously and without comment at Houston's Town Meeting II!

The Femme Mirror

There was, however, no rest. The following week Tau Chi Chapter hosted the annual summer Tri-Ess Board of Directors Meeting. After the day-long meeting, the Rudd's hosted a lawn party at their lovely home, with its bridge over a limpid pool and its fairy gazebo - and all that luxuriant greenery! It was a good old fashioned Texas barbecue complete with all the fixings and hosted by members of Tau Chi Chapter. Honored guests were Diana and her daughter, who recently informed her mother that she was transgendered. Vicki Thomas was there to do some videotaping, as everyone enjoyed a good old Texas hoedown!



Arkansas

DATELINE: LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS

The Cotton Belles have a very wise president. In their May, 1995 newsletter, Suzanne addresses the problem of crossdressers who try for a hyper-feminine image and then wonder why they can't pass. Advises Suzanne, "The serious crossdressers need to take what we have and try to make it blend in. We try to dress more our age. We try to dress as genuine women would, appropriate for where we are and what we are doing. Don't go for a walk around a track in a dress and four inch heels while all the other girls on the track are wearing shorts or sweats and tennis shoes.

"A lot of crossdressers overdress and think they should always wear a dress or skirt. I have been shopping in Dillard's, and I noticed that, other than the sales clerk, I was the only one in the store wearing a dress or skirt. All the other women were wearing slacks. I have also noticed that most crossdressers wear fake fingernails and/or nailpolish while most women have shorter nails

The Femme Mirror and clear polish or no polish at all. Many women, excluding professionals, don't wear all that much makeup such as mascara and eyeliner...so if we want to blend in and "pass" and not stand out to attract attention, we should dress appropriately for the situation.

So, dress naturally, don't try too hard, and be natural."



Illinois

DATELINE: CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

In April, Deanna Johns celebrated her twentieth anniversary as a member of Tri-Ess and of Chi Chapter. Hers has been a long career of unselfish contribution. Risking her own privacy, she has appeared on national television on behalf of crossdressers and Tri-Ess in particular. In her column, "Deanna's Diary", the honoree reminisced on the development of her chapter, from the time six to twelve members huddled in a room, to the present, when over a hundred members attend the Christmas party. Deanna witnessed the birth of the "Be All You Want to Be" weekend, the "Puttin' On the Ritz" awards banquet, and the numerous media appearances that made crossdressing a household word. During her career, Deanna has served as an officer of Chi Chapter and a highly visible member of the Tri-Ess National Board of Directors. It is thanks to her coordinating efforts that the Membership Directory has reached the estate it has today.

So, what did the members of Chi do to honor, Deanna? They put her back to work, electing her as Chi Chapter's Treasurer!

From Chi Chapter also come the following words of wisdom from Suzie:

"About crossdressing. In the beginning it can be totally consuming! That's precisely what scares the wives! Perspective is the key word! Easy to say, hard to do, though, I know. In my own current philosophy I am striving to view my dressing as a gift. An unusual gift, one not understood by most people, but a gift nonetheless. As in any gift given to us by the Creator/Cosmic Glue/Mother Earth (whatever), whether it be a talent for music, art, dealing with people etc., (again whatever) it can be abused if used incorrectly and cause much discord in one's life. But if put into a proper perspective it can be a thing of beauty and a source of joy!

"Crossdressing, I believe, is a gift we are meant to have fun with. A gift that can expand our consciousness and widen our perspective, allowing us to see life from more than just one side. Sort of like one foot in a high-heel and the other in a wingtip! Hee, hee! (A real fashion no-no and I heartily don't recommend simultaneous wearing.)

"Also, it helps to think of it as a new wonderful horizon. One to be explored, savored and shared. And if you can somehow get your spouse to view it as something good and maybe allow her to share in it, then you'll be miles ahead of the game. First, though, she needs certain assurances from you that will convince her that she is not losing the husband she knows! If you want it all to work you also need to be THAT man she married! Sure, your revelation to her was probably a real shock, right? Think of it this way. What if you came home from work one day and found your wife dressed in lumberjack overalls, construction boots, a red flannel shirt and wearing a glue-on bristly beard! Would this be disturbing to you? Think about it!

"Granted, the above example is an over-simplified one, but I think it works. Perspective, moderation, control, and trying to understand each other's viewpoints are essential. (Also one heck of a good sense of humor works wonders, too!!!!)"



North Carolina

DATELINE: CHARLOTTE, NC

Tri-Ess Executive Director Carol Beecroft flew in from California to visit with the members of Kappa Beta Chapter. Her talk on "Twenty-two Benefits of Tri-Ess Membership" covered the wide gamut of services Tri-Ess offers from chapter development, to publications, to conventions, to mail-forwarding service, to pen-pal programs, to support services.

During her talk, Carol stressed the Tri-Ess educational outreach to college classes, radio and television talk shows, and gatherings of helping professionals. Carol pointed with pride to the upfront leadership role Tri-Ess has in IFGE. Programs under development, including a national couples' program, and a book donation program to public libraries, were also discussed by Carol. Since Tri-Ess sponsors so many programs and services, Carol pointed out the need for the continuing support of its members.

Newsletter Editors:

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Many Thanks.....
-MIRROR Staff

One of the nicest things about the PINK SLIP is reading all the how-to articles. Outgoing Editor Peggy offers a comparison of masculine and feminine vocabulary so we can sound, as well as look, feminine:

MASCULINE	FEMININE
Pleasant	Charming
Pretty	Lovely
Nice	Sweet
Great	Fabulous
Different	Quaint
Skinny	Slender
Fragile	Delicate
Mean	Nasty
Big	Nasty
Thanks a lot.	Thank you very much.
I like chocolate.	I just love chocolate!
It's nice out.	What a beautiful day!



New York

DATELINE: SCHENECTADY, NEW YORK

Fran Estes has discovered an eyeliner by Almay, appropriately called I-Liner, which is sold in a little bottle with a small brush-applicator attached to the cover. It comes in a number of shades and sizes and costs around \$4.00. Unlike many pencil-type eyeliners, it has a significantly more staying power. The summer issue of "Lord Cornbury's Closet" expresses the editor's joy that so many people in the local transgender community are attending both the meetings of the TGIC open group and Lambda Chi Lambda Chapter. This writer would like to share in the editor's joy! In areas where many can find it in their hearts to belong to more than one group, there will be much more sharing of ideas and closer bonding among brothers and sisters in the entire community. As the editor states, "It is recognized more and more that we must be supportive of one another if we are to continue to grow in acceptance by society." Well said, Fran!



Georgia

DATELINE: ATLANTA, GEORGIA

In February, the ladies of Sigma Epsilon gave a program on crossdressing and gender issues to Dr. Agnew's class at Emory University. As a result of Dr. Agnew's recommendation, Professor Diane Jones invited the chapter's representatives to speak to her class at Oglethorpe University on April 24th and again on May 11th at DeKalb Community College. Such sisters as Lauren, Paulette, Brenda, Caroline, Denise, Sandy, Michelle, Raquel and Jennifer have done a most outstanding job of presenting crossdressing to helping professionals, and thus, to society.

The Spring Cotillion was its usual successful self with sixty attending dinner. Featured in the Miss Spring Cotillion Pageant was the talent segment, consisting of a "Transgendered Obstacle Course." The skills tested were the ability to do the hula hoop, serve as cocktail waitresses, do interpretive dance to music from "Rites of Spring" and to strut down a runway while modeling a fur coat. The last event was the most fun. It involved the contestants being blindfolded and led before exalted President Lauren and given the opportunity to apply makeup to the president's face. Contestants were evaluated for overall style and time of the makeup application. Afterwards, some were heard to murmur that the "makeover" resulted in a major improvement in Lauren's overall appearance. In the end, Veronica M. was named Miss Spring Cotillion 1995. First Runner Up went to Beverly R. and Second Runner Up to Melanie B. Everyone had a most enjoyable (and hilarious!) time.

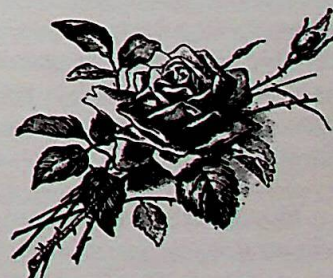


Minnesota

DATELINE: MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

The sisters of Beta Gamma Chapter also enjoyed a visit from our National Executive Director. Carol had nice things to say about the people she met at Beta Gamma and was impressed with the vitality of this relatively new Tri-Ess chapter. This group is doing a lot of things right. One of these is the networking the chapter leadership is doing with other Tri-Ess chapters around the country. They are drawing chapter members from as far away as Virginia, where Andria enjoys poking into Sofronia's Reticule and Onnalee's Bag.

The outreach efforts at Beta Gamma are going very well, with a recent campaign to the "TC Reader" drawing a total of thirteen inquirers which produced five enjoyable interviews. In addition, there is a lot of interest in Beta Gamma on the computer bulletin boards. This writer has recently referred two potential new members to Beta Gamma Chapter. The leadership of Beta Gamma continues to set lofty goals and, for the most part, to achieve them. Next year they will be co-sponsoring the IFGE Convention. For 1996 they have set as a goal nothing less than to be named Chapter of the Year! Chapters around the country, take heed!





Arizona

**DATELINE:
TUCSON, ARIZONA**

The New Tucson Chapter
by Frances L.
(First lady, Tau Upsilon Chapter)

"A new chapter of Tri-Ess, to be known as Tau Upsilon, is now in the process of forming in Tucson. A pilot group of five crossdressers got together and decided to form the chapter in early

April of 1995. At the initial meeting, we voted to adopt the present Constitution and Bylaws of the Alpha Zeta chapter, and merely change all the pertinent references, and we want to sincerely thank the officers of AZ for their fabulous kindness. Yes, there are Big Sister Groups just as there are Big Sisters.

"We are presently meeting at the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC), located on North Mountain Avenue just north of Fort Lowell Road. We meet the first Saturday of each month in the small house near the street and meetings start at 8:00 PM. In case of being lost or completely unable to get to a meeting, please contact Rebecca B. We are relatively loose (a la Tucson) and may have the meeting en femme at Tucson's Downtown Saturday Night celebration (a street fair/carnival/shopping experience downtown), or wherever. Please call for updated plans. All

of you are, of course, welcome and donations to cover the room rent are graciously accepted.

"First Lady elected is Frances L., Second Lady is Rebecca B., and Secretary/Treasurer is Jamie A. We are in the process of putting out a press release to all area hospitals, mental health and counseling groups and police & fire authorities, as not only an outreach but also as a primary contact point that will alert various professionals in the Southern Arizona area to the group's existence. I expect Rebecca will be getting some screening to do. Paperwork for the new chapter has been mailed to Jane Ellen Fairfax, and we shall see what turns up."

Their paperwork was in excellent order, and by now this brand new Tri-Ess Chapter should have its Charter! Well done, ladies of Tau Upsilon!

WANTED

A FEW GOOD SISTERS!*

By Denise (FL-2746-S)

Jane Ellen Fairfax has been known to say, "anytime two or more sisters get together, that's Tri-Ess in action." How would you like to be part of the action?

Carol and Marlene from the Tri-Ess National Office enclosed a notice in the "FEMME MIRROR" a few issues ago looking for sisters interested in forming new chapters. Why? because it's a problem for many sisters to attend chapter meetings due to the distance to get to them. The solution is more chapters in more areas. Here is how you can be part of the solution by forming a new chapter in your area.

It's no secret, starting and keeping a chapter going requires a considerable amount of work. The Phi Epsilon Mu chapter of Central Florida formed in Summer 1995

1987. Like many other chapters we have experienced our share of challenges over the years. To assist those interested in starting a chapter, we are offering an article titled "I'll Have One Chapter To Go."

The article covers the real nuts and bolts of how to get a chapter started and keep it going. After all, why re-invent the wheel?

Here is what you need to do if you have been thinking about starting a Tri-Ess chapter. Contact Marlene, the Tri-Ess Chapter Development Director, at the address shown below. She'll send information to get you started, including a copy of the above article.

(You may call Carol Beecroft at 209-688-9246 if you have any questions.)

Marlene
P.O. Box 4067
Visalia, CA 93278

NOTE: If you have recently started a chapter or would like a copy of this article, you may also write or call Phi Epsilon Mu direct. We'll be happy to send a copy your way. GOOD LUCK!

Phi Epsilon Mu
P.O. Box 3261
Winter Park, FL 32790-3261
(407) 657-7151 (Denise)

* to start new Tri-Ess Chapters.

I'll Have One Chapter To Go!

by Denise FL-2748-S)

Over the past several years the subject of crossdressing has been presented to the public on a fairly regular basis. However, the day we can openly tell our families, friends, and employers about our crossdressing still seems off in the distance somewhere.

Tri-Ess continues to grow in the number of members and new chapters in both the United States and Canada, however, more chapters are needed if we are ever going to reach into the closets of the millions of other crossdressers that can benefit from our support.

Each crossdresser is unique in some ways, but share many things in common. Remember the impact it had on you when you first joined Tri-Ess and/or made contact with another sister? A chapter in your area will provide the same valuable support to many others if you are willing to make the effort to get things rolling.

If you have been interested in forming a chapter in your area, but haven't made any real effort because you don't know exactly how to do it or have security concerns, read on!

A few years ago I couldn't have imagined being a Tri-Ess chapter officer. (I know the other chapter officers reading this are nodding their heads in agreement.) Not only is it rewarding, but quite discreet and painless to be involved in the operation of a Tri-Ess chapter!

Are you wondering why this article is titled, "I'll Have One Chapter To Go?" It's because most chapters meet at a place where they move-in, then move-out after each meeting. Below, you'll read how this really applied to our chapter!

Here is a brief history of Phi Epsilon Mu. Three sisters in Central Florida were watching the Phil Donahue Show when the Tri-Ess address was shown. They all jotted down that address, contacted and joined Tri-Ess, made contact with each other, and finally met in July of 1987.

The next month the sisters met again, but this time there were five, next time - six, and so on. The number increased each time they met. Even a wife or partner showed up now and then! In 1990 a serious crisis developed when our president and treasurer suddenly stepped aside. This also left us without a meeting place.

Talk about needing "One Chapter To Go!" It was a nightmare come true, but several members stepped in to help when our survival was seriously threatened. Fortunately, a new meeting place was found quickly enough to notify everyone by regular newsletter, and we didn't even miss a meeting!

Starting and keeping a chapter going takes dedicated people that are willing to work and spend a lot of time talking and writing to others. But, the effort is worth it when you see the difference it makes to those who find a safe place where they can meet others like themselves.

SO, WHERE DO I START?

It's important to make your chapter known and that potential members are able to contact you. If you haven't done so yet, rent a post office box for the chapter. The cost is about \$40 per year. It will be the primary point of contact and must not change unless absolutely necessary. This address will be listed in many publications that may end up in the hands of a new sister looking for a support group in her area. If the address is no longer valid, she will be very

disappointed when her inquiry is returned, after she had finally gotten enough nerve to write.

When completing the form for the P.O. box, specify all mail be accepted. This is very important! (Mail will be addressed to the chapter many ways.) If a piece of mail is not addressed exactly as specified, it may be returned to the sender. List both masculine and feminine names of those authorized to pick up mail. (Some items must be picked up at the counter.) The post office doesn't usually check, but just in case, make sure the records are straight.

The telephone is a valuable means of contact, if one is available and the number can be published. It is hard for some sisters to put things in writing, while others can't receive crossdressing-related mail.

NOTIFY THE HOME OFFICE

You most likely have already made contact with Marlene at the Tri-Ess National Office to let her know you wish to form a chapter. She should have sent some other chapter development information to you. If you haven't already done so, write to her at the address below:

Marlene
P.O. Box 4067
Visalia, CA 93278

SCRATCH MY BACK!

The National Office will soon be referring new Tri-Ess members to your chapter. Your chapter will also be referring new sisters to Tri-Ess. Everyone wins and grows this way. Your forming chapter's address will be included in the Femme Mirror. However, everyone in your area may not see this notice. Write a letter announcing the formation of your chapter. A short newsletter would be even better.

The Femme Mirror

You can scan the latest Tri-Ess Directory for sisters in your area and send a copy of the notice using the Tri-Ess forwarding service, or Tri-Ess will provide a complete list of members in your area. (All Tri-Ess members are not listed in the Directory.)

I recommend notifying all sisters in your state, even if there are other chapters. Some prefer to travel out-of-town to crossdress; others look for as many events as possible to attend.

When you begin receiving requests for information, save yourself a lot of work. Instead of writing the same thing over and over each time, put all the basics in one document and send copies.

However, a short personal letter answering specific questions and personally greeting the sister adds an excellent touch. Don't forget, many sisters have not written to another crossdresser before. (Remember all your fears when first contacting Tri-Ess, and/or other sisters.)

CHAPTER NEWSLETTERS - THE CRITICAL LINK!

Newsletters are the most critical element of any crossdressing organization. I recommend publishing a newsletter before the first meeting just to announce the new chapter. A simple one or two page newsletter may communicate progress such as first name and city of those showing interest in the chapter, news about where and when the first meeting is planned, possible chapter names, etc. Newsletters are the single link that ties a chapter together. (For those who can't attend meetings, the newsletter is the whole chapter!)

After the first meeting another newsletter should be sent out as soon as possible. Don't forget to list the name and general location of all who attended. Everyone likes to see her name in print. (Especially new sisters who will get a special tingle when they read the newsletter and see their names.) You'll have plenty of other news to write about after that historic first meeting.

You'll learn to keep an eye open for newsletter material. For example, if a member tells you about a recent experience, suggest they write an article for the newsletter. When someone sends in a comic, article, etc. give them credit for it. You'll likely end up with a group of "staff writers" and more material than you can print!

Most chapters trade newsletters with other chapters and organizations. This is a good source of articles, comics, and information about what is going on elsewhere.

THE MEETING PLACE Where it all comes together

As mentioned previously, we suddenly lost our meeting place a few years ago. Obviously, this was a serious problem. We were fortunate to quickly find a place that has worked well. (With the meeting place out of the way, the next few months were spent filling officer positions and spreading the workload among several sisters.)

A good meeting place is a major part of any chapter. Initially, it is helpful if a member is able to have the meetings at her home to keep costs down. However, a "neutral" place is better. As a chapter grows it is impossible to remain discreet, and parking often becomes a problem on residential streets.

We didn't want just any place to meet. It had to be a place where several sisters could change in private, where we could bring our own food and drinks, and have enough room for a fair-sized crowd. It had to be discreet enough that new sisters could easily get to us, and inexpensive enough to keep the cost per member down. (We didn't want much, did we?)

Although some sisters thrive on going out in public en femme, I don't recommend holding meetings in public places like restaurants, bars, etc.. Many sisters are not comfortable in public, and most wives or partners are especially uncomfortable out in public when their mates are crossdressed. First-time sisters are challenged enough just finding the courage to go to a meeting. If forced to go to a public place, many

simply won't come. (I have been working on getting one gal to come to a meeting for five years!)

It's important to have private dressing facilities. Many sisters can't dress at home and/or can't come and go from their place when dressed. Also, some sisters have no desire to go out in public en femme, while others won't come if they can't come "dressed."

THAT FIRST MEETING

For the first meeting, a regular motel room can be a good, temporary meeting place for four or five sisters to spend a few hours together and have a place to change.

As attendance increases, adding an adjoining room would provide more space. Some chapters use a meeting room plus a regular room for changing. (If you use a meeting room, you may not be able to bring your own food or drinks.)

Initially, meeting location changes may be unavoidable, but it's important the meeting place doesn't change for much the same reason the address shouldn't change. (I know sisters who had lost contact with us, and were able to re-contact us by knowing when and where we meet.) Can the members find the meeting? Imagine driving for several hours to attend your first meeting. But, once at the location you are too frightened to go into the office and ask which room the crossdressers are meeting in!

There are over 600 suites in 20 buildings where Phi Epsilon Mu meets, and we never know which suite it will be until check-in time. To make finding the meeting place easy, we place a sign in the window of a car parked near the office. The sign shows the building and suite numbers, and is easy to understand for those knowing what to look for. It's invisible to others who are busy worrying about other things.

Also, we tape a chapter business card on the suite door, so there is no question it is the right room before a member knocks. Another sign on the back door allows more discreet entry from the parking lot.

These suites have two bedrooms, two bathrooms, a living room, a kitchen, and dining area. The cost ranges from \$125 to \$200 (or more) per night depending on the month.

You may wish to contact the manager of a prospective meeting location and explain that you represent a support group for crossdressers, their wives and girlfriends, and you need a discreet place to meet. Stress this is not a wild, all-night party. (Set your meeting hours before the first meeting.)

Our meeting hours are based on the 4PM check-in time and run from 4PM until about 11PM. Occasionally a few of the sisters stay a bit later to continue discussions, but rarely much past midnight.

How necessary is it to contact the manager? We didn't, and have been meeting at the same place for years without a problem. Where your chapter is located may dictate this necessity. Fortunately, being very near to Disney World, the area is so full of people we're not that visible. (We would have preferred to have had the manager's approval, but as they say, "if it ain't broke, don't fix it!")

If you find a meeting place that looks promising, make reservations for several months. We reserve our suites in blocks of six months. (You may need to pay in advance for some months, so be prepared to handle this expense.)

Reservations are necessary because it is impossible to notify everyone at the last minute if there are no vacancies, even if you are able to find another nearby place to meet.

MEMBERSHIP DUES & MEETING FEES

Most chapters have annual dues in the \$20-\$25 range. This covers general chapter operation, such as newsletter costs, post office box rental, sending information packages to prospective members, etc.

Also establish a per-meeting fee to cover the cost of the meeting place and other meeting expenses. Do this before

the first meeting and make everyone aware of it up-front. Typical meeting fees are \$5 to \$10. (When the meeting fee doesn't cover all expenses, the difference is made up from annual dues.) A minimum of 20 members must attend for the meeting fee to cover our expenses. Attendance usually runs from 25 to 35 sisters plus some wives and partners

NOW THAT WE KNOW WHERE, W-H-E-N ?

"WHEN" is an important issue, too. Chapters usually avoid holding meetings the same day as neighboring chapters or other group meetings. (Many sisters want to attend as many activities as possible.) It's easy enough to check other groups' meeting dates.

Determining the best meeting day can be a double-edged sword. That is, nowadays many people work on weekends, evenings, and nights. No matter when you hold meetings, it is going to leave out some people. For many chapters it is very difficult to have more than one meeting per month.

FINALLY, ALL DRESSED UP (AND A PLACE TO GO!)

Now that everyone is all dressed up with a place to go, what will they do? Don't worry! Just get a few crossdressers together and they'll take care of the rest. They will keep busy socializing, sharing experiences, discussing problems, exchanging make-up tips, good shopping places, etc. Think about meeting programs for the future, but you must get the girls together first!

Snacks and cold drinks add a nice touch to any meeting. This responsibility should be shared by as many others as possible. Consider asking each attendee to bring an item. Eventually, your meetings may include a meal. This is another plus. In our earlier years we often ordered pizzas, then exchanged dares trying to find someone brave enough to answer the door when the delivery person arrived!

Nowadays we enjoy a pot-luck dinner each month. A volunteer prepares and brings the main course. The

The Femme Mirror chapter reimburses the volunteer for the cost. Others are asked to bring side dishes, deserts, snacks, etc.. The chapter provides soft drinks, ice, and snacks.

WOW, YOUR WIFE GOES TO MEETINGS!

Wives and partners are a significant part of our chapter and it's an honor when they attend meetings. We don't charge for wives or partners to attend. (This is purely a matter of preference by each chapter.) Carol, my partner, organized their first meeting a few years ago by assembling the wives and partners in private for an hour or so while the crossdressers held their business meeting in another room. Sandra is another partner who attends meetings even when her boyfriend can't! Then, when Carol's work schedule changed and she could not attend, Sandra pitched in to run the wives and partners meetings.

Only they can say for sure, but the wives and partners that attend meetings seem to develop a better understanding and acceptance of their mates' crossdressing. Of course, you have to get them to the meeting first!

Many meeting activities can and should involve the sisters and the wives and partners together. However, it is important to allow the wives and partners to have some private time alone. (It's one of those "girl" things.) Occasional non-dressing events have been fun and helpful to the crossdressers, wives, or partners who have attended them.

BUSINESS MEETINGS

As the size of the chapter increases you will eventually start holding semi-formal business meetings at some time during the evening. New members and guests can be introduced, chapter business can be conducted, upcoming events announced, etc. At the first few meetings you'll likely spend a lot of time on chapter business such as filling officer positions, resources available from members, finances, meeting activities, meeting schedule, etc.. Do try to keep "official" business as brief as possible. ...Don't forget to have some fun, all work and no play makes Jane a dull girl!

Summer 1995

The Femme Mirror OTHER MEETING ACTIVITIES

One of our favorite meeting activities is Dressing Themes. Often related to holidays during the month, this gives attendees the option of dressing with a certain theme, color, or style for the evening.

Here are some examples: in January the theme was "wear your newest outfit." For February we often have a red and white theme for Valentines Day. However, this year we had "Super Dress-Up Night" for February. It was a chance for the gals to wear that really special outfit.

Meetings are only one day a month. There are many other days to go out shopping or dining while dressed. To the more experienced sisters, I must ask, why not be there for the new sisters? This is mentioned because of the number of sisters who come to meetings for a year or so, then disappear because meetings no longer seem to be a challenge. They seem to forget about all those who were there for them when it was time for their first meeting.

However, we didn't forget about those who thrive on going out. On Friday evening before meetings we have a dinner at a fine local restaurant that just happens to be at the largest shopping mall in the area.

Also, after meetings many of the gals go out to local night spots. This is a perfect opportunity for the new sister to experience her first night out on the town as well as having some good contact with the public.

H-E-L-P !!

A very important ingredient for a successful chapter is to get as many people as possible involved in its operation. However, many leaders have difficulty getting help and often end up doing most of the work themselves. Not only is this unfair, the chapter becomes dependent on and controlled by one person. If that person suddenly leaves, the chapter may be in serious trouble.

A chapter that is well organized and managed is able to continue with
Summer 1995

little disruption even if a key member suddenly drops out of the picture.

How do you get others involved? No easy answer here. But, one way is to be specific about the help you need. For example, ask someone to help you build a house. If they don't know anything about building a house you'll get a blank look. Now, be more specific in asking for help building a house by going to the hardware store to buy a bag of nails. What type of response would you probably get?

It's often the little things that count. Give a member a small task to complete and they will usually do it, and feel good they can be of help. Here's another example. What reaction would you get if you asked one person to bring all of the drinks to each meeting? How about asking four members to each bring a 12 pack of soft drinks? Which task would you rather do?

Many newsletters contain notices such as, "WE DESPERATELY NEED ARTICLES." They are asking for material to print, but leaving it up to the reader to find this "material." If the readers knew what to write about in the first place, you wouldn't see these notices.

Being more specific now, ask the readers to write a paragraph or two explaining how they picked their feminine name. (Or any other subject.) The result will be an article involving several members, one everyone can relate to, and less work for the newsletter editor.

Many Phi Epsilon Mu members have volunteered to help over the years and here are some examples of the things they do for their chapter.

We own six folding chairs. Sandra stores them at her home and brings them to the meeting each month. Previously, she picked up rental chairs on the way to the meeting and returned them first thing Monday morning.

Laura interviews several gals at each meeting about a particular subject, often centering on what they are wearing. Then, she writes a column for the

newsletter that we call "DRESSES." This successful column is a spin-off of the previously mentioned suggestion for newsletter material.

Both Edie and Laura maintain our chapter library. They share the check-in and check-out of books, videos, etc. at meetings. They also order new material and weed out unused items. By sharing the job, if one of them is absent, we still have half of the library available.

Laura also brings the supplies necessary for a cup of coffee after dinners. This goes nicely with the desserts!

Nora Helene assists with the newsletter by applying address labels, stamps, folding, and stuffing envelopes, then dropping them in the mail box. Since the newsletter is always working against a deadline, once the copies are back from the printer, I'm more than happy to have someone else take over. Alice often helps Nora with the packaging and mailing.

Alice's phone number is our chapter hotline. (My number is also listed in case she is not available.) Alice was a major force behind our reorganization mentioned earlier. She served as chapter president for over a year. Today she helps in many ways such as meeting prospective members, sending out chapter information packages, cooking for chapter dinners, representing the chapter at special events, and on and on and on!

We recently started a program where chapter members volunteer to list their phone number in our newsletter so others have someone to call when they need a sister to talk to. This can be especially helpful to newly emerging sisters.

Another popular meeting activity is door prizes. As members check-in and pay meeting fees to our treasurer, Jody, they are given a door prize ticket. Later in the evening a drawing is held. We have awarded some great prizes. (Cross "ladies" pens, personal stereos, makeup, jewelry, books, etc.) Many of the prizes are purchased by members between the meetings.

Jody also maintains our chapter photo albums. She will start Volume IV soon. Jody takes photos at each meeting, including plenty of extra shots. Then, she adds the new photos to the albums so we have a complete historical "photo" record starting with our first meeting. The extra photos are given to the sisters. This is often the only way many of them get photos of themselves "enfemme."

Each month I bring boxes of supplies such as paper plates, eating and serving utensils, cups, napkins, trash bags, ice bucket, ice pic, dish soap, dish towels, sewing kit, pins, no smoking signs, smoking area signs, serving bowls, paper, pens, tape, sign materials, etc.

I check in at the office each month, but what happens if I can't make it? Jody has the information necessary to check in, plus, an emergency kit containing the basic items needed to keep the meeting as close to normal as possible. This includes a shopping list for the supplies needed. What if both of us can't make it? Alice reserves the rooms for us so she also has the info needed so she could "step-in to check-in" if necessary.

Many sisters vacation in Central Florida and have stopped in to visit us over the years. We learn from each other with this type of networking. So, if you ever have an opportunity to come to Central Florida, contact us in advance so you can stop-in for a taste of good old southern hospitality. You are always welcome!

Oh yes, our most recent visiting sisters were Deanna and Denise from Chi Chapter of Chicago. We've had a problem with our library. Borrowed items often fail to get returned in a timely manner. Deanna and Denise mentioned their policy of requiring a security deposit on all items checked-out. Hey, why didn't we think of that?

This brings to mind some words painted on a wall at one of our local colleges: "When you're through learning, you're through!"

Good Luck!

Giving Campaign for Outreach Fund Big Success

Tri-Ess to Purchase Display Board for Outreach at Helping Professional and Transgender Community Conventions

We did it! As we go to press, members have donated over \$1200 toward purchase of a professional quality display board, such as the one pictured in the Spring 1995 issue's account of the Gender Research conference at Northridge.

This display board will enable Tri-Ess representatives to present information to helping professionals at their conventions, as well as provide a great outreach at gender community conventions.

The following sisters donated generously to make this outreach possible:

GA-3641-S	Susan	CA-4042-O	Bobbie
CA-2457-S	Sybil	OR-1773-G	Arlene
TX-3287-J	Liana	FL-3817-G	Patricia
CA-1018-D	Charlene	AZ-2489-B	Norma
CO-2857-H	Carol	SC-2274-C	Nancy
OH-1353-O	Jennifer	MS-2125-M	Lee Frances
MD-4045-D	Stephanie	CA-4136-R	Lynn
FL-1291-C	Nora Helene	CO-3461-M	Kathleen
FL-1491-M	Susan	OH-2521-H	Mary Ann
MI-1171-C	Barbara Ellen	CA-3550-L	Alana
NJ-3784-W	Jennifer	GA-3073-M	Jan
IL-4098-M	Miranda	NJ-3818-L	Carol Ann
NY-1320-N	Connie	CA-3048-B	Diane
CA-3682-C	Kay	NV-2653-R	Radene
FL-2260-N	Jody	Phi Epsilon Mu Chapter	
IN-3202-K	Deborah Anne	FL-2746-S	Denise
IN-3161-M	Vicki	TX-1757-M	Jane Ellen
CA-3921-F	Jamie	UT-3827-P	JoAnn
NY-2639-G	Gina	UT04078-R	Linda
MN-3538-O	Jennifer	FL-3077-E	Alice
MI-4074-U	Kristy	VA-3343-P	Peggy
OH-1619-H	Charlotte	WA-3744-B	Felicia
OH-3825-H	Paula	FL-3771-C	Michelle
FL-3462-S	Kelly	GA-4141-P	Jenel
NY-3739-F	Danielle	FCBC-3926-L	Laura
NY-1550-M	Camile	HI-3102-R	Roberta
SC-3028-C	Jackie	NC-3882-R	Dyan
NC-3118-B	Catherine		



Sex and Crossdressing

by JoAnn Roberts, Ph.D.

SEX!

Now that I have your attention, I'd like to talk about... sex; in particular, crossdressers and sex.

We don't read much about sexual issues and crossdressers because this community has spent so much time trying to divorce sexuality from transvestism. And I understand why that happened. *In the beginning*, there was Virginia Prince and she tried to spread the word about crossdressing. But Virginia's message kept getting mixed up with sex when she was talking about gender. So, Virginia and others set about separating the sex issue from the gender issues in order for the message to get through. That message was (and still is) transvestism isn't about sexual orientation, it's about gender orientation and self-awareness.

Unfortunately we've lost a piece of ourselves along the way, our sexuality. While I certainly agree that crossdressing says nothing about my sexual orientation, it speaks volumes about my own sense of sexuality. Why? Because my crossdressing, like that of tens of thousands of other crossdressers, has its roots in the early development of what is erotic to me, what turns me on. I am not ashamed that I am a sexual person, nor am I ashamed that my crossdressing was, and sometimes still is, sexual. Repression of one's sexuality is mentally unhealthy.

We need to look at crossdressing and eroticism from the long-term view. I've been crossdressing on and off since age 11 or 12, and seriously pursuing the art and illusion of femininity for the past 15 years. What I've found is that the eroticism of crossdressing has diminished with time. This should not be a surprise. Think about how erotically charged you felt as a teenager holding hands with your first date. Think how erotically charged your first kiss was, or the first time you touched someone

Summer 1995

else's naked body. Do those activities now hold the same erotic charge they once did? Probably not. And it is, therefore, not unreasonable to assume that crossdressing loses a lot of its erotic charge over time as well.

I remember what it was like crossdressing way back when. Even the thought of being able to crossdress provided erotic satisfaction. These days, I decide if an episode of crossdressing is erotic or not. In other words, I control the erotic content of crossdressing; it doesn't control me. And that brings us to the bedroom. Many, many crossdressers fantasize what it must be like to have sex while crossdressed. Most fantasize having sex with a woman, although some will fantasize having sex with a man as an ultimate expression of femininity. However, very few crossdressers actually have the opportunity to experience sexual relations with anybody while crossdressed. That's too bad, because everyone ought to have at least one sexual fantasy fulfilled in their lives.

But, I digress. With so many crossdressers in committed relationships, we almost never talk about how these couples deal with sex and crossdressing in the bedroom. Part of the reason is that "sex taboo" we've created around crossdressing, and part is because what we do in our bedrooms is a very private matter between partners. But, it should be known that there are couples where crossdressing and sex have been successfully worked into their relationship. Yes, there are women who actually enjoy sex with a crossdressed partner. My partner is one of those women, and I know of many others as well. Some of these women have never had a problem with their partner's desire to crossdress for sex, and some have learned to enjoy it. What all of them share in common is a realization that no matter what their partner wears in the bedroom, underneath all the clothing is the same person with whom they fell in love.

Those crossdressers who are fortunate enough to have a partner willing to experiment in the bedroom, report that their eroticism is heightened if they are crossdressed. They report longer and more satisfying sexual sessions with their wives. The wives who are willing to talk about their sexual activities say that they end up more sexually satisfied as well. So, for those couples who have found ways to incorporate crossdressing into their love-making, it sounds as if sexual satisfaction runs high.

There are probably innumerable variations of sex and crossdressing in relationships. I am certain that no two couples have the same arrangements. For example, I know of one couple where the wife accepts her husband sleeping in a negligee, but when it comes to sex, there is no crossdressing. Another wife I know accepts having sex with her husband partially crossdressed (garter belt, stockings and negligee), but she doesn't want him sleeping like that. There is yet another wife I know who will go anywhere and do anything with her crossdressed husband in public, yet she does not want to have sex with him crossdressed. And, finally, I know of a wife where anything goes in the bedroom but she'd rather not be seen with her crossdressed husband in public.

So, let's not deny that we're sexual beings with a need to express our sexuality in highly personal ways. If you are a spouse with a crossdressing partner, give it a try. You never know. You just might enjoy sex a whole lot more than you thought.



(ED.NOTE: Reprinted from the May 1995 *Sooner Belle*.)

Sexuality and Intimacy

by Linda Peacock

One of the questions I was recently asked by a friend who is the wife of a transgendered man was: Do I see sexuality and intimacy as being the same thing or as only being related? She wanted me to define my terms and how they relate and/or inter-relate.

Not being a therapist, my answer would have to come from a strictly personal sense. In my own life, I have found myself moving through sexual growth in cycles - tentative and passive; explorative and now dominant and demanding. Sex has a totally different dimension for me as I grow older. The need for sexual contact is not diminished; rather, it is focused differently than it was 20 years ago, or for that matter, 5 years ago. My sexuality and intimacy differ greatly.

I believe sexual contact is a form of intimacy, and it can be a most powerful form at times. At others, it is simply, for me, a physical need for sexual contact - a feeling which builds up and will not go away without sexual contact. Yet, I find my definition of intimacy to really reach much further than sexual contact. To me, intimacy is the day to day contact with your partner. It is the reaching out of your hand or foot at night, just to touch and know he/she is there. It's the quiet times in the morning, reading the paper or watching the sunrise together. It is the physical touching - the hugs, the kisses, that caresses, which have no sexual connotation but instead simply express affection, the need to be with you. It is the day to day living together, sharing time and space and dreams.

Yes, such intimacy can lead to sexual intimacy, but not always. If it does, then I can't think of a more intense, moving moment, when the intimacy of love and affection culminates in sexual intimacy.

However, moments of daily intimacy, when you share something special, are the moments of intimacy you remember in the future. Times when you watch a dream come true, times when you share a loss, times when you simply share a special moment.

For a wife or partner of a transgendered man, it may become difficult to focus herself to include his femme self in their intimate life. This is especially true when the partner wants sexual intimacy, while en femme. Many, many women are totally unable to handle this aspect of their gender

relationship, and it is such a powerful a turn-off that it runs over into other aspects of their relationship, often damaging or even destroying the intimacy they share in their day-to-day lives together.

I think it is important for the transgendered man to be especially concerned about meeting his partner's need, and not forcing his femme self into their sexually intimate moments. It is also important that his femme side not interfere with the special times they share as woman and man, outside of sexual contact. She has a need for a man - she married a man, she has lived with a man, and a man can meet her needs.

At the same time, I can't help but feel that the woman who is truly intimate with her husband/partner, in an emotional, spiritual, mental sense, will love the entire person he is, and will not shut out his femme side. The acceptance of that femme side must be a truly moving moment of intimacy for that man - it is giving from the woman to the man, saying to him that he is a whole being, and that she accepts that whole.

The concepts of intimacy are wide ranging and complicated, and what is good for me may not be good for another. However, with work by both partners, the bond between them can be enriched, strengthened and become the most important thing in their lives. Acceptance of each partner by the other, with concerted efforts to care about all facets of that partner, will lead to the ultimate intimacy, which in my mind is the bond of mind, heart and body, with the thread of love sewn throughout the relationship.

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Fill'um Up!

Had troubles finding a library book dealing with *Crossdressing*? Most People do!

Tri-Ess to inaugurate project to help readers locate books concerning *Crossdressing*.

1000 Libraries will receive gift donations of book packets.

by Carol Beecroft

Have you ever gone to a library, looking for a book dealing with crossdressing, only to find that there were no books available? In my journeys around the country, visiting chapters, etc., I have asked the above question and found that 98% of sisters who have looked in their local libraries did not find anything available. Another 1% found something that was rather objectionable! Do remember that there are people looking, every day, in libraries throughout the country, concerning crossdressing. Unfortunately, they, like the above sisters, are not finding anything. Wouldn't it be great to have four excellent books available to library patrons in libraries throughout the country?

Well, now you can do something about the dreadful lack of reading material dealing with crossdressing. Recently, I made a proposal to the Tri-Ess Board Of Directors concerning a plan of mine that will essentially inaugurate a new three-year program that will fill 1000 libraries with a gift packet of four books for each library. The Board approved the plan.

In addition, I have presented this "plan" to the various chapters that I have been visiting. I have found that 100% of the chapters are interested in backing the plan.

I have come up with a selection of four books that will form a gift packet tailored to the needs of professionals, wives, crossdressers and the general public. The books that I have selected, after consulting with some of the members of the Board, are:

- 1) Crossdressing, Sex & Gender
- 2) My Husband Wears My Clothes
- 3) Coping With Crossdressing
- 4) Understanding Crossdressing

These books are well written and definitely will help those seeking information about crossdressing.

And, here's a great bonus for you! All four of these books will be available to Tri-Ess National at WHOLESALE prices. Each author was contacted by me and they very generously offered to allow Tri-Ess National have the books at a wholesale price! INSTEAD of having to pay approximately \$52.00 for the books at retail, OUR WHOLESALE price will be about \$27.00 - plus postage.

I am asking that each chapter do its very best to fill at least one library each MONTH! In fact, there are several large chapters which might be able to fill two libraries each month.

In addition, there are a number of INDIVIDUALS in Tri-Ess who can afford to fill one library each month. If you fill one library each month that will equal 36 libraries filled over three years.

Here's the way that we will handle things: A chapter, or individual, will contact Tri-Ess National and tell us that they wish to donate a book packet to a certain library - supplying us with the name and address of that library. At this point, there would be no necessity to send us any money for the books. And, before I forget, chapters or individuals might learn the name of the particular librarian who would make the decision to accept the gift.

After learning the name and address of the library in question (as well as the name of the particular librarian) Tri-Ess National would activate a letter from Vern and Bonnie Bullough, distinguished scholars, and send it to the library. In this letter Drs. Bonnie and Vern Bullough will notify the librarian that someone wants to make a donation of four books dealing with crossdressing. In their letter, the Bulloughs will point out that:

- 1) Professionals need up-to-date information concerning crossdressing.
- 2) Wives need information so that they can cope with the situation.
- 3) Crossdressers need to learn more about themselves, and,
- 4) The general public needs to have correct information available to them.

Along with the letter from our fine scholars, there will be included a postcard that the librarian will use to signify that he or she will accept the gift. (There have been occasions in the past where libraries would NOT accept donated books). There is no use in sending books to a library that will reject them. In the letter from the Bulloughs they will tactfully

ask that the books be made available for general circulation.

After Tri-Ess National receives the postcard of "acceptance," we will contact the chapter or individual involved and at THAT time we will ask for a check for approximately \$27.00 plus postage. This will cover the wholesale price of the four books. Upon receipt of the check from the donor Tri-Ess National will send the books to the library along with a cover letter from me.

The National office will keep a rather detailed record showing:

- 1) Who is responsible for the gift packet;
- 2) The name and address of the library involved, and,
- 3) The date that the books were sent.

Tri-Ess National plans to give this important project plenty of space in the *Femme Mirror*. In each issue of the *Mirror*, we will carry a CONTINUING account or list of just who is donating the book packets, the name of the libraries involved and the date of the gift. Just visualize a page or two of the *Mirror* showing a list of donors and the library's names under the donor's names. It will be interesting to observe the lists of libraries "filled" growing in each subsequent issue of the *Mirror*. As an example, we might show Tri-Chi chapter with two libraries listed under the chapter name. With each subsequent issue of the *Mirror*, the list of libraries will grow under the Tri-Chi name. We will also show individuals with the same list of libraries "filled."

I want all of you to know that I will fill one library each month. I have also heard from a few others, already, who plan to do the same.

What is exciting about all this is that our various and numerous donors will have "growing lists" of libraries served, shown in each issue of the Mirror. Eventually, we may need three pages to list all the libraries "filled." Now THAT'S exciting!!!

I do believe that people will become highly motivated after they see how many libraries are added in each issue of the Femme Mirror. Thus, our readers will become motivated to donate our book packets to libraries in their area. Eventually, I hope that every chapter and hundreds of individuals will fill a library each and every month.

Do remember that our goal at the end of three years will be the filling of 1000 libraries throughout the United States and Canada and libraries in some foreign countries. No longer will people go to a library only to find nothing to read about crossdressing. NOW, there will be four excellent books that will help thousands of inquiring individuals.

So, do YOUR part!!! In WHICH library, in YOUR area, would you like to start??

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Tri-Ess Board Meeting by Kymberleigh Richards

The summer meeting of the Society for the Second Self (Tri-Ess) resulted in several actions reinforcing Tri-Ess' support of the entire transgender community even as it focuses on the needs of heterosexual crossdressers and their families.

A resolution approved by the board at its June 24 meeting stated their opposition to discrimination in the workplace and support of firm punishment for those convicted of hate crimes based on bigotry, racism and bias. The statement comes at a time when increased attention is focused by the transgender community on such issues as "gay bashing" and termination of employment for reasons of transgenderism.

In addition, the board committed a substantial amount of its outreach budget to a joint effort at this fall's National Association of Social Workers' convention in Philadelphia, in conjunction with the Outreach Institute, IFGE, AEGIS, and Renaissance. It will be the second year Tri-Ess has joined with the other organizations at the NASW event. Other outreach programs supported by the board include new pilot programs at its largest chapter in Chicago for newcomers to the crossdressing community and for parents of crossdressers and a regional advertising campaign proposed by a coalition of chapters in the Southwest.

Tri-Ess reported no substantial changes in its membership total, despite numerous commentaries from various factions in the transgender community denouncing the organization over the past year over its focused orientation. A proposal to create a new photo membership ID card was referred to a committee for research.

Chairman Jane Ellen Fairfax also announced that the publicly announced resignation of Kymberleigh Richards as director had not been accepted and that Richards would continue in her existing capacity. In her resignation, published simultaneously in Cross-Talk and the Tri-Ess national magazine The Femme Mirror, Richards had expressed concerns over her public comments reflecting negatively on the organization; in making the announcement, Fairfax said "making those concerns public effectively negates them" and thus there was no need for Richards to distance herself.

The board holds its major meeting each summer in order to deal with the majority of matters concerning the national organization. A second meeting is held during each fall's "Holiday En Femme" for matters of urgency and the approval of the following year's operating budget.



Hmmm...



By Rachel Miller
 Opportunities for Improvement
 P.O. Box 31475
 Oakland, CA 94604

Guess what's next - that current reality crowd telling you that change is impossible. You can't dress like that. You can't act like that. You can't associate with real men. You are all weird. You ought to be ashamed of yourselves. You can't tell your wife. You can't tell your family. You can't tell your friends. Nobody wants to be around people like you. If anyone finds out, you'll lose your wife, your job, everything. You thought it was possible to dream. You thought somehow you could transform the world. This is reality. It will always be like this. Get used to it. Give up!

This might be a good place to begin generating some of that creative tension we talked about last time. There are those who will stand in your path, and you might even believe some of them. There must be compelling reasons why things are like this, after all, isn't the system designed in our best interest? Don't the people in charge always do what's best for us? Aren't they right when they tell us it's impossible to alter the system? If that's true, we can quit now and return to our constricting little closets.

But, it's not true. The sum total of valid reasons for discriminating against us would fit comfortably in a thimble. We don't have to stay in those constricting closets any longer. There aren't any compelling reasons for the way things are, and the system isn't designed in our interest. The leaders

Do You Really Think You Can Change Things?

don't always do what's most advantageous for us, and we do have the power to modify the present conditions.

You don't need me to convince you which statements are true. Too often, we don't give ourselves credit for being able to question things and think through issues. Often, we assume the other person knows what he is talking about, decide we're no experts, and take whatever he says at face value. Don't trust the establishment to tell you whether you can change things. The establishment is in control. They don't want change because it could cause them to lose control. They tell us what works for them, and try to convince us that it works for us. Hogwash. If they are wrong in how they treat us, and they are, do you think they will tell us they are wrong?

Why?

We're going to have to do a little thinking and questioning on our own. It isn't hard, we just need practice. We have the native ability to become expert thinkers and questioners. Think of a 5-year old. They are naturally inquisitive. They ask, "Why?" They want to know how everything works, and why. We need to learn that same lesson. Important concepts need to be challenged periodically to ensure their continued validity. Sometimes, the concept was wrong. Sometimes, conditions have changed, and it no longer makes sense. Sometimes, it will be reaffirmed. In any case, every concept benefits from an occasional challenge. Each of us was once a 5-year old, so we have the ability. Now, we need to exercise our ability.

We need to stop accepting the established order, and focus on creating a new society. Asking, "Why?" is helpful in challenging how things are, but it tends to get bogged down in the past. It surfaces the arguments used to

support the past. We need to go further and learn when to transition to asking, "Why not?" It focuses on the future, where effort can be devoted to making improvements.

We all know that living in a closed society isn't a satisfying existence. The good news is that, for the most part, the perceptions of us are wrong, and we can fix them. Some of us may lack certain skills. Some of us may lack great intelligence. Some of us may lack an extensive formal education, but each of us can exercise persistence and be successful. We say we want to solve our problems, but can't because we lack...(fill in the blank). If we want to solve our problems, we simply need to start work, and have the persistence and determination to see our work through to completion. The question is not, Can our problems be solved? Of course they can be solved. The question is, Are we willing to go to work and finish the job? You understand that if you do nothing, the current reality will continue unaltered. You don't want them to win by default. Do you? Of course not.

Today's hardship
 leads to rewards in later life.

Chinese Fortune Cookie

Fortune cookies sometimes provide a clear insight into life. Isn't it time for you to quit complaining and making excuses about today's hardships and start seeking future rewards?

Rachel Miller is the author of "The Bliss of Becoming One!" which will be published by Rainbow Books Inc. later this year.



Wednesday Evening 'Get Together'

7:00 - 9:00 pm

♦ buffet dinner at the hotel - meeting old and new friends
♦ official welcomes
♦ after dinner presentation - **'Presenting the Canadian Rockies'** - a naturalist speaks of and illustrates the beauty, history and natural significance of the four national parks that surround us.

Thursday - Out and About

Continental Breakfast - 10 am

Going International - Simply a Step in the Evolution of Tri-Ess

A joint presentation by Jane Ellen Fairfax (Tri-Ess Chair) and Carol Beecroft (Executive Director) - reviewing the history and progress of both Tri-Ess and acceptance of cross dressing in Society, celebrating a new recognition of Canada's involvement, and looking forward to anticipated next steps.

.....

The Lake Louise Rendezvous - noon to 6 pm

All participants encouraged to tour the Canadian Rockies to spectacular Chateau Lake Louise for a late light lunch in the Tom Thompson Room overlooking the lake and the Plain of Six Glaciers. Several busses to provide alternatives on the return route - more tour, shopping in Banff, or straight to the hotel.

.....

Dinner/Entertainment at the Hotel - 8:00 pm on

After dinner presentation by Dr. Peggy Rudd - **'Reaching for the Gender Gift'** (masculine/feminine balance in androgyny) - followed by a fashion show (Darkside) - entertainment by 'Ty, Tyme and Twiggy' - Karaoke in the lounge.

Friday - Learning/Partying

PLENARY SESSION - 10 am

'SPICE and the Partner's Perspective' - Linda Peacock briefs us on the role of SPICE and the understandings that have emerged on the needs and views of the female partner in the relationship. A prelude to a SPICE afternoon discussion group.

SESSION OPTIONS - 10:45 to 12

Religious Views - Cathy Helms
If, When and How to Involve the Children - Peggy Rudd coordinates panel discussion.
Womenspeak - Dr. Moira Andrews on feminine voice patterns and strategies for communicating socially

SESSION OPTIONS - 2 to 4pm

SPICE Session - SPICE members host a special session for the wives and significant others - presentations and discussion.
Speech Practice with Moira
Makeup lessons - 3 demos
Wig Care - 'hands on' experience

.....

Party Night in Kananaskis - 6 pm

We will be joined by friends of Tri-Ess from Calgary area for:

- ♦ a wine and cheese hour sponsored by our vendors
- ♦ "Stepping Out" - with Lisa
- ♦ a sumptuous western BBQ
- ♦ a 'floor show' featuring the best of Calgary.

Saturday - Banquet Day

A Day of Relaxation and Preparation for our Final Banquet

The Spa will be open - vendors will be helping with makeovers, wigs, outfits - local hikes and/or high altitude skiing for the adventurous - minitours and shopping trips.

A Conversation with Virginia - morning coffee with Virginia Prince

Chapter Exchange - TriEss reps from all over North America share experiences, program ideas and suggestions for a stronger future for our organization(s).

.....

A Brunch Workshop for Couples - 10 am to 1 pm

A facilitated opportunity for couples to share their stories, learn from each other's experiences, and create strategies for a 'better tomorrow'. Carol Beecroft - representing the National Couples Group.

.....

A Formal Evening Together

- ♦ a social hour from 6-7 pm
- ♦ banquet/presentations @ 7 pm
- ♦ **Wild West Casino and Murder Mystery**
- ♦ Karaoke toward dawn
- ♦ **Alexis** - professional photographer on site to record our best appearances ever.



Concluding with the Sunday Brunch - 10:30 am - goodbyes until next year!

1995 Holiday En Femme

November 15th - 19th

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- ♦ an exceptional program
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a special **SPICE** session for wives and significant others ... a brunch **workshop** for couples ... if and how to **involve the children** ... make-up ... wig care ... walking like a woman ... talking like a woman

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... see you at Holiday En Femme!

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CROSSDRESSING 101: Getting To The Heart Of The Matter

by Genevera Martin

All of my life I've been a solitary crossdresser and have had nobody to share my experience with; no one to tell me I was OK; nobody to bolster my self-esteem; nobody to accept me for better or for worse. Why? "For worse" was known only to me. I kept it a secret, and that secret came between me and any honest relationship I ever hoped to have.

In the next few paragraphs I'll be telling you my feelings about the gender community, i.e., Tri-Ess, my home chapter Alpha-Rho and other support groups. I'll introduce you to a few of my friends, and hopefully all of it will fit into a coherent whole. I have been an active member of the gender community for over a year. In retrospect, some of my best experiences as a crossdresser were achieved during that first year, as well as some of my worst experiences as a human being. I joined the gender community because I felt I needed, and could accept, support, and encourage others. So, after a few false starts, dead ends and wrong turns, I finally found my local Tri-Ess chapter. When we think of Tri-Ess or our local chapter, we think in terms of support. I wish now to clarify that term. The New American Webster's Handy College Dictionary defines support in this way:

support v.. 1, bear; hold up. 2, uphold; back; speak for; encourage; aid. 3, provide for; maintain. 4, act with or accompany (a performer). 5, put up with; endure. n. 1, maintenance. 2, a base; something that supports. - supportable, adj. endurable; tenable.

Tri-Ess or our local chapter offers us logical support. They uphold us, back us, speak for us, encourage us and aid us. They provide and maintain a place for us to meet. There are many programs available through National and our individual chapters; Holiday Summer 1995



En Femme, SPICE, and other conventions, informational brochures, computer bulletin boards, videos, newsletters, this magazine, the list goes on and on. But in the end this boils down to logistical support. Please don't think I'm trivializing the role of Tri-Ess or your local chapter, but they do not offer the majority of the support the crossdressers and our significant others need. So, where does that support come from? If we go back to the definition of support, we think in terms of a verb. But the name of Tri-Ess or your local chapter is a noun. If we look at the meaning of Support as a noun, we find that it is a base. Every building must have a firm foundation if it is to stand for a long time. Tri-Ess and our local chapter provide that base of support.

Our main support works from this base; and that support is people. The people at the chapter meetings will

probably be the first real support we receive. They will bear us and hold us up; they will give us a sense of belonging and community. Through our activity in the community we will develop friendships and acquaintances which will further strengthen us. But even this is not complete. This is because the strongest and most effective support will come from one of your highest echelon of friends; and believe it or not you stand about a 75% chance that they are not in Tri-Ess or the gender community.

This may come as a surprise to you, but please bear with me. The friendships you develop in the gender community will initially be based upon the commonality of your crossdressing. It will take a while before people in the gender community will enter your highest echelon of friends. So who are your highest echelon of friends, and why are

they so special? As for who they are: probably your mother or sister possibly a brother or other relative; the buddy you double-dated with for years, your wife, your girlfriend or the friend you call up every time something neat happens or when something bad happens. All of these people are likely candidates to be in your highest echelon. I say likely, because closeness does not imply intimacy necessarily. In my life, I will probably never be able to introduce Genevera to my sister. Her prejudices and attitudes are such that Genevera would put a wedge between us. She would still love me, and we'd still talk and visit; but we would never be very close.

Most high echelon friends, more often than not, are long-term friends, and their support is based on an emotional bond not grounded in gender conflict. It is grounded, rather, in a true love and caring for the core person in you. These are the people, who according to the definition, put up and endure. These are some of the qualities that make up the core person: how you feel about things, how much you care for people and animals, how empathetic you are, how pleasant and uplifting you are to be around. High echelon friends love and care for the core person in you, even without what I call the options. By options, I mean musical interest, old movies, religion, hiking, bike riding, garage sales, *The Three Stooges*, physical appearance, books, crossdressing; you name it.

At present, my most supportive friends are the ones outside the gender community. Why? They have known me longer. They have had the time to bond with my core person and I with theirs. Hopefully, in time, people from the gender community will enter into my higher echelon as well.

Now, where do the options fit in? These are the bait that attract people to us. Our appearance and our interests enable people to develop superficial relationships with us. Depending on the overlap of options and synergy of core personalities, various degrees of friendship will emerge. All of us have high echelon friends, and if we think about it, we can find friends with whom we can

share our femme selves. The idea can seem daunting, and a bit scary; but, at least in my life, the risk has been worth it. I have around eight friends outside the gender community who know about Genevera, and in every case, the knowledge about Genevera has been a bridge in our relationship, and not a wedge.

So here's a brief look into my rogue's gallery (the people are real, but I had fun giving them new names):

Alicia is a dear lady friend who was the first person I told about Genevera. She was taken aback at first. She later asked to meet Genevera. She accepted Genevera because she is the femme version of me. She comes to my Tri-Ess meetings with me. She is hard to shop with; our tastes are different. (Genevera is more femme than she is.)



Chumley is the first male I told. He was shocked at first. After all, he and I used to fight each other in full armor and shields with broadswords! Pretty macho stuff! We two had quite a few discussions on gender and related subjects. By the way, he belly dances; a minor source of gender conflict for him.

Then there is St. Alabaster. For many years, the good friar pontificated on the evils of people leading alternative lifestyles, unknowingly saying many hurtful things to me. In the course of his religious journey, he donned the habit of the Franciscan Order. As he processed along his path, he eventually reached a crossroads, and

The Femme Mirror

also guessed I was a crossdresser. He learned that you judge someone by their core person and not their options. He has voluntarily defrocked himself, and his facade of religious prejudice has crumbled like the alabaster he was named for. Now, he edits my articles.

In the case of Marie, it was through a process of guilt by association that my crossdressing came to light. She did not understand it, and was afraid of it. But the bond between our core persons enabled her to get past her fears. She takes me gypsy shopping, and she alters my dresses and skirts. She lets me talk, and she listens to me. She lets me express both Bob and Genevera. She is a belly dancer, also. She is a very special friend who is very feminine and willing to share her femininity with me.

Lastly, there is Esmee. She is the lady I've been closest to in this world. I told her about Genevera three years after our fourteen-year relationship had ended. I felt that she needed to know why I had behaved the way I did all those years. At first, she was hurt; yet we still care very deeply for each other and are still best friends. She doesn't understand, but it hasn't stopped her from loving and caring for me and trying to understand my need for Genevera.

Revealing your femme self to others is both difficult and rewarding. I think there is much support available to you if you give your highest echelon friends a chance. Some of my friends were told by me and some had guessed about my crossdressing. But in all cases, they have rallied behind me. In some cases, I had previously thought they wouldn't be supportive. It just goes to show you that you can't underestimate the power of a good friendship. This doesn't mean that you should reveal yourself to a friend you don't feel fully comfortable with. It just means that the capacity for acceptance and support is greater than we think.

I hope this article has been of interest to you, as well as helpful. In future articles, I'll be addressing various topics. If you have any comments or any suggestions for article topics, please contact me through the *Femme Mirror*.

Summer 1995

Farewell

by Merissa Sherrill Lynn
Founder, IFGE

ED NOTE: Merissa Sherrill Lynn needs little introduction to readers of the Mirror. (Please see her article in the Fall 1994 issue, and her Guest Editorial in this issue.) What follows is her farewell to the transgender community upon her retirement as Executive Director of the International Foundation for Gender Education. She has asked that it be published in the Mirror as well as the Tapestry. As we go to press, Merissa reports that since the IFGE Atlanta convention, she traveled a bit before returning to Boston to pursue studies at Harvard University.

During the final luncheon at the Atlanta Action '95 conference, I announced my intention to retire from both IFGE and the transgender community. Since I had dedicated most of my adult life to serving the transgendered community, it was a difficult thing for me to do. However, I held off my tears, gave my goodbye speech, introduced my replacement, Alison Laing, then stepped into the background. My intention was to step out of the limelight gracefully, with as much good will as possible. Since rumors about my departure had been flying around the community for quite some time, I didn't expect any difficulties. In spite of my expectations, a few people were still surprised.

After lunch, when everyone had returned to their sessions, I was wandering the hallways, thinking, when a long-time IFGE supporter, and a personal friend, stopped me. "Can I talk to you?" Since she had a mean glint in her eye and a deathlock on my elbow, it didn't appear as if I had a choice. She led me to a sofa in an isolated corner of the hotel, sat me down abruptly, and said, "Now, what the hell is going on?"

She was clearly upset with me, which put me on the defensive.
Summer 1995

"I'm retiring."

"I know that. I was at the lunch, remember? Why?"

I thought my little speech at lunch would mollify most everyone, but evidently I was wrong. My stated reasons for retiring were practical. Basically, I told people I got things started, and now it was time to take a break. If people needed me, I'd still be there for them. Although a bit on the political side, my comments were good, and they were honest. However, my friend knew me too well, and didn't want the political reasons. She wanted the real reasons, the personal reasons. I began to panic. It took some very compelling personal reasons to get me to quit, but they weren't reasons I cared to share with the world. Besides, I didn't know how to answer her without sounding like a martyr, or bitter, or like the IFGE board and I were enemies. She waited.

She could see I didn't want to talk about this, but she wasn't going to give up. I sighed, studied the floor for a while, then answered. "Because I like the sound of retired better than fired. The IFGE board was going to fire me, so I decided to save them a whole lot of trouble, and save me some face, and voluntarily retire."

"How in hell could they fire you? You're the founder, for Christ's sake!"

I was afraid she was going to take it like that. "It's OK!" I tried to reassure her. My reassurance wasn't enough.

"Well, I don't think it's OK."

"It's OK, believe me." I went on to explain to her that I already had one stress-related breakdown, and was constantly on the verge of another. I told her my spirit and my heart were both gone, and I had no love left to give.

Without love and without motivation, what good was I? I desperately needed a break.

Then I went on to explain to her my relationship with the board. The IFGE board and I had been at odds since before IFGE's inception. At first our differences made for a healthy balanced organization, but things changed. I had my dreams and vision, and they had theirs. Different dreams, different objectives, and different ways to achieve those objectives. Over the years it became obvious that the twain would never meet. The sense of mutual respect and common purpose was gone, which made getting me out of the way was just a matter of time. Separating myself from IFGE would give me a chance to heal. Perhaps it would allow me to support their vision without sacrificing my own. Perhaps I could help them follow their path, without losing sight of my own. Perhaps I could support them without sacrificing myself. Perhaps. Leaving seemed best for everyone.

"But you're the heart and soul of this organization!"

"I was told in no uncertain terms that corporations don't have a soul." In a flash of anger, I added, "If IFGE doesn't have a soul, then there's no place in it for me."

I regretted my comment the moment I said it. My personal bias against, and inability to cope with corporate thinking had just reared its ugly head. My friend was about to protest, when I quickly raised my hand. "Sorry, sorry, sorry!"

She began to scold me. "Come on! There'll always a place for you. You're right, corporations don't have souls, and boards are usually made up of cor-

porate minded people. IFGE's no exception. So what? Corporations exist for a reason. They have a purpose, and objectives. You created IFGE's. The board's job is to achieve those objectives. Your job is to support them and keep them on track. That's what founders are for. Corporations don't have souls, remember? Without it they're lost. They don't know what they're doing or why they're doing it. They forget why they exist; get hung up on egos, and private agendas, and dollars. Then they self-destruct. You're IFGE's soul, which is why they need you. There's going to be a place for you as long as IFGE exists."

She was trying to help me feel better, and I appreciated her effort, but it was too late. It's just that I loved IFGE, and the thought of it no longer being a part of my daily life was painful. IFGE, the Tapestry, the convention, everything, was part of my existence, and I didn't want it to end. I shook my head with regret, apologized again, faked a smile, then started to cry.

My friend also started to get emotional, for she knew what IFGE, and the transgendered community, meant to me. She also knew that by retiring I was quitting, giving up on my own dreams, something which left me sick to my heart. She understood my comment, and my apology. We looked at each other. Suddenly, the thought of two middle-aged women sitting together in a hallway of a fancy hotel, bawling, struck us both funny. There we were, giggling and blubbering like a couple of schoolgirls talking about a love affair that'd gone awry.

She glanced around to see if anyone was listening or watching, then asked me the hardest question. "What's really going on here?"

My eyes closed, tears flowed across my cheeks, and my chest become knotted, making it hard to breath. My hand involuntarily waved through the air. "I'm fried, totally burned out. I've been at this for 21 years. My energy's gone, my money's gone, my health is gone, and I just don't have anything left to give." I rested my forehead between my thumb and index finger, and chewed



"It has been a long hard journey, a journey that spanned more than 21 years. During that time we have experienced the evolution of our community. We have accomplished many good things, and laid the foundation for our future. Now it's time for me to close one door and perhaps open another. It's time for me to say farewell, at least for now, and prepare for the challenges which lay ahead. Please know that you will always have my love, and my support." - Merissa

on my lower lip. "I don't even have any patience left, not for the board, not for the community. The queen of patience and understanding, and it's gone. It doesn't take anything at all for people to get to me, and I can't live like that."

I glanced at her, and she had nothing to say. Well, she wanted to know why I was retiring, and she was going to sit there and find out, whether she wanted to or not.

"I'm too thin skinned for this stuff. That's why I could never make it in the corporate world. All those fine young cannibals would eat me alive. IFGE was my world. I created it so I could escape from theirs, so I could survive, but in came the wolves, and out I went. Every comment, every criticism, in the newsletters, every time I turned around, and it hurt, and it keeps on hurting. It's been hurting for years. It's gotten so I feel like my only purpose in this community is to serve as the beetle on top of the dung heap, there for no other reason than to catch the shit as it gets tossed from the barn."

A few workshops let out and our conversation was interrupted by people stopping to say hello, and to chit-chat. Eventually they figured out that we were not in a mood to chit-chat, and they left us alone. My friend raised her hand, palm up, then nodded to encourage me to continue.

"I'm just tired, tired of not being able to be myself, or make my contribution. I'm tired of feeling paranoid and frustrated. I'm tired of being in the pressure cooker all day long, tired of being alone, going home every night in tears, waking up each morning dreading the day."

"Yup, sounds like burn-out to me."

"You know, I don't even know who my friends are anymore. It seems like all my friends, and my personal base of support, are gone ... mostly through death and abandonment. At least now I'll find out who my friends are."

She took my hand and smiled. That smile felt good, for I knew she was a

The Femme Mirror
friend who would listen to what I had to say, and still be there tomorrow. It was also a warning that I had dug up enough of my dragons for her to understand why I was leaving, and I should let the rest of my dragons sleep.

"So what happens now?"

"I don't have a clue."

"Do you have any kind of a retirement plan?"

"Nope."

"How are you going to make a living?"

"Don't know. Scary, isn't it? I've spent 8 years as an academic bum, overlapping 11 years as a ski bum, overlapping 21 years as a transgender bum. I'm 53 years old, and I've never had a real job. I've spent all my life looking for a reason to live, and never learned how to make a living. For most people it's the other way around. First thing's first. The first thing is to go back to the mountain and get refocused, rekindle my spirit and work on my health. After that, whatever's supposed to happen will happen. Perhaps someday I'll be able to contribute again."

We looked at each other, shrugged our shoulders, and simultaneously said, "Perhaps!" We laughed.

For my practical minded friend, her first priority would have been to figure out how to pay next month's bills, but she knew me well enough to not argue with my priorities. She also knew me well enough to not try and tell me what to do. "You know," I continued, "as soon as I announced my retirement, people started coming up to me with projects. Riki Ann Wilchins wants me to pick up the banners and lead the parades. She's already planning my name change to either Mahatma Merissa or Merissa Luther King. Milesa Phar thinks I should do a pilgrimage to the organizations across the nation. She suggests I write a regular column of the journey, then do a book. Another suggestion was to collect my letters and articles for the last 21 years, and do a historical book on our community."

"Are you going to do any of that?"

"No."

"That's good. It's about time you thought of yourself for a change."

Summer 1995

"But that's not how I think. I think in terms of contribution. All I want is to be healthy enough and able to make that contribution. My life has to have a purpose, a reason for being. If I don't have a purpose, there's no reason for me to be here. That's why I couldn't be an employee for the board, or conform to their idea of who and what I'm supposed to be. They wanted me to be less, and do more of the things I'm not good at doing. To me that's a horrible waste of my life. There's no possible way I could be happy or productive under those conditions."

"They wanted me to be a leader. To me a leader is a general or a corporate boss or something, and I'm definitely not that."

"Definitely not."

"I don't want to be a leader, leastwise not that kind of a leader. I want them to be leaders, the generals, the corporate bosses, or whatever. If I must be a leader, then let me be the spiritual leader, the keeper of the flame, or just plain Mom. I'll open the doors and turn on the light for them, but then I'll get out of their way. That's what I do, open doors, turn on lights, help people spread their wings and fly. How could I live without being able to do what I do? How can I be happy if I cannot fulfill my reason for being? I'm not a follower, so I won't follow them. To me a follower is like being an employee. I wanted to walk beside them, not behind or in front. I wanted to keep the lights shining so they can see their path, and to watch them fly, and be there for them if they fall."

"Sounds like Mom."

"That's what I told them, but they either wanted me to be chief or one of the Indians, and I'm neither one."

"So, now what happens to IFGE?"

"I don't really know, but it's their chance to fly without me. Hopefully they know I won't abandon them. After all, IFGE's my baby. Moms don't abandon their children. IFGE's grown, and it's time for me to step aside. Perhaps I'll go have more babies now, I don't know. What I really want..."

The workshops let out, and a steady stream of people passed us by. Most were talking about the session they had just attended and the rest were deep in thought. Since it appeared people were going to leave us alone, I finished my statement. ... "What I really want is for people to see this transition as a good thing. By taking this action, the board empowered me, and I empowered the board. They took me out of that damned pressure cooker and gave me some freedom, and I did the same for them."

I stared down the corridor partly to see if anyone else was coming, and partly to gather my thoughts. "Now I can take the time to heal, dream new dreams, rekindle my spirit, and follow my path wherever it leads me."

"Great! So, when you coming down to do some hiking?" She had a subtle way of letting me know it was time to shut up.

"Soon."

We laughed, then gave each other a hug, the kind of a hug that cements a friendship for a lifetime. We then went back to our rooms to prepare for the evening's banquet.

With some time to spare before the banquet, I stared out my 26th story window trying to visualize the future. Suspended precariously from the building across the plaza, was a window washer. As I watched him swing from window to window, I thought of myself, 25 years ago, high on Profile Cliff, dangling by a thin rope 800 feet in the air. Twenty five years ago my life was in a precarious position, and I had no idea what the future would bring.

I have come very far since then, but once again, I find my life dangling from a very thin rope, with no idea what the future will bring. Perhaps it is my time to fall. Then again, perhaps I still have many doors to open. It's time to find out. It's time to say farewell to yesterday, and to move on to tomorrow.

Farewell.

CALIFORNIA DREAMIN' '95

by Vicki Thomas

"Must have taken a wrong turn in Albuquerque."

---Bugs Bunny

After a visit with Jaye Reviere in Albuquerque, I arrived in Burbank on Thursday the 20th of April. When I went to register, the first people I saw were Linda and Cynthia Phillips. I immediately went outside and started looking for the Alamo. I didn't find it, but someone did tell me that if I was looking for a mission I could find one in downtown L.A., where I could get three square meals a day and a blanket to sleep on. Next, I assumed these figures had to be ghosts come there to haunt me for non-attendance at the "T" Party. When I didn't hear any chains rattling, I finally figured out that this must be the real Linda and Cynthia Phillips. I went upstairs knowing that this weekend was going to be a success, with two over-qualified workers like this on the registration desk.

"Beautiful downtown Burbank"

---Johnny Carson

My immediate need was for a hairdresser. I asked around and discovered that no one in the hotel could give me a permanent. I was referred to a place a couple of blocks away from the hotel. Not knowing if they had been briefed about us, I phoned them and spoke in my best feminine voice. Upon arrival I found this beauty salon to be something right out of one Johnny Carson's monologues. To begin with, I had to hike back to the hotel, because this establishment didn't take credit cards. Also, with few exceptions, the beauty operators and clientel were of the silver-haired generation, making me the youngest and best looking woman in the place.

"Where be these enemies? Capulet! Montague!"

---Shakespeare

Returning to the hotel, I checked first to see if my query for a roommate had been answered. It had, in the person of Holly Cross. A participant in nearly all crossdressing conventions, Holly is best known as a member of the board of IFGE.

Later at dinner I had Linda Buten of CrossPort, Chair of the IFGE Board of Directors, on my right. Following our meal at Bobby McGee's (one of three nearby restaurants), the two of us retired to the bar in the same resaturant. Two guys tried to pick us up, but Linda blew the whistle on who and what we were. Too bad. I could have used a free drink.

Later I met up with a large contingent of crossdressers at the Crystal View Lounge in the hotel's Suites Tower. It was then I got an impression of how many different groups were represented. No one group dominated the convention, nor did philosophy seem to matter as much as geography for the California groups involved. Here I met Melanie Yarborough, the President of Neutral Corner. Her very insightful article, "Tri-Ess Is Not The Enemy," appears in the Spring issue of the Femme Mirror.

Cheers also for Born Free, which had significant representation beyond what you would expect from a small group. Other groups represented by more than a handful were PPOC, Alpha Chapter of Tri-Ess, ETVC, Neutral Corner, and IFGE. With such diversity, those gender politicians who like to spin their little coalition webs might as well have stayed home, because this convention was going to be fun, informative, and friendly.

"Hollywood men are all wrapped up in themselves."

Friday morning I was anxious to board the PPOC "love mobile" for a trip to Universal City Walk. This is an Art Deco outdoor shopping mall. While it was very interesting, I had bigger fish to fry. I told the driver not to wait for me because it was my plan to go on the Universal Studios tour. A movie buff for most of my life, I wasn't going to miss this chance to see the famous back lot. As I boarded the trolley car that would take me by the infamous "Psycho" house, "The Chicken Ranch," and the pond where the mechanical shark from "Jaws" lives, my picture was taken with "The Mummy." I also went on the "Back to The Future" ride and toured a sound and special effects stage. I would have like to have seen more, but the evening banquet was scheduled for 7 PM and I needed to get back.

"It's only rock and roll if you don't have a partner."

Although it is very popular to talk trash about food served at crossdressing conventions, I felt the food at the Burbank Holiday Inn was above average, considering that if we ate like gourmets registration fees would have to go up, thereby pricing poor sisters like me out of the market. The staff could have been briefed better on how we like to be addressed. This is excuseable for a hotel hosting its first event, but being called "Sir" more than a few times I found very distasteful.

On the other hand, the ballroom staff was among the most efficient and organized I have seen. Meals were served on time and tables were cleared quickly. Friday night's

Summer 1995

The Femme Mirror dinner was followed by a Fifties Dance. Since I didn't know anyone well enough to ask them to dance (Well, I do know Jim Bridges, but he is too short), I was my usual wallflower self. No other convention has come up with anything for singles or crossdressers attending without their spouse to do while couples are celebrating their acceptance of a dual-gendered existence on the dance floor. So, I can't really jump on *Dreamin'* for not doing what everyone else is not doing.

The only thing that saved the evening for me was seeing my old friend Wendy Parker again. Wendy reports that she has retired her Mr. Sister Act. Gee, Wendy, just because you had an earthquake near you last year is no reason to believe that God doesn't like your act!

Travels with a Massachussetts Yankee

Saturday morning my roommate volunteered to drive me around. I had hoped to take the tour of NBC studios in Burbank, but no tours were scheduled on the weekends. Instead we drove a round about route that took us back to Universal City, Forest Lawn, and Glendale. We arrived back at the hotel just in time for lunch. Each group sponsoring *California Dreamin'* was assigned to host one of the meals. Tri-Ess and Alpha Chapter had the honor at the Saturday luncheon and were represented by Kathy Helms and Virginia Prince.

After lunch I attended a seminar entitled "How To Manage A Dual-Gender Life." Jamie Whitney explained that success in handling neighbors can be increased by pre-Summer 1995

conditioning them to the members of your household. This is to say that if they expect to see two females with access to your house, they won't identify you as one of them. Jamie's experience with employers was also encouraging. Many sympathized with her and gave her cover while the hormones were having their effect. Surprisingly, there are more married transgenderists than you might expect. For a single person the challenges are much different, and I might end up teaching this seminar before I find someone more qualified than myself to instruct me.



Our own Vicki and Southern California's one and only Christine whoop it up at Saturday evening's banquet.

Movin' On and Movin' Out

Saturday evening was a formal or period dress dinner. Entertainment afterward was provided by Movin' On, a group of crossdressers and one genetic female who did a musical review in their natural voices. Singing

in a feminine voice when you are biologically a male is something that not all of the company was up to. Mara's impersonation of Madeline Khan spoofing Marlena Dietrich was superb. Likewise, Mickee & Mimi singing "Sisters" was also good. Julia gets an A+ for production value on her exhausting musical tour through state and world capitals.

"There's got to be a movie in all of this."

I had hopes that I could find someone after dinner who was going to the Queen Mary. But just like the cop you can't find when you need one, I found myself having to be content with another evening in the Crystal View Lounge. I decided to do my bit for public education.

I sat down next to a man named Chic, who had figured out that we were not there making another one of those beer commercials. I was explaining to him the difference between sex and gender when I was joined by Lisa of L.A. Lisa. I got him to admit that he found her more attractive than a very overweight genetic female seated behind us.

When we both assured him that we were both heterosexual males and therefore unable to accept his gift of flowers, he just kept saying to himself, "There's got to be a movie in all of this." To which we could

only reply that crossdressers look more exotic than they really are.

"There's got to be a movie in all of this."

"Crunch time. No, I mean brunch time."

Most conventions end on a Sunday with a Sunday Brunch. I've always hated this change-over day because it forces us to come down too fast and too quickly from the "high" we get from being women for several uninterrupted days. The best thing that I can say about California Dreamin' is that this convention keeps on going on Sunday with two afternoon seminars/workshops. No longer chained to the registration desk, Linda and Cynthia Phillips conducted one of the seminars entitled "Until The Next Convention." Coming down the proper way from the convention experience was one of the topics discussed, but a potpourri of ideas, experiences, and ideals were voiced.

Second Lieutenant Vicki Thomas

Holly took me to the airport to catch my late afternoon flight back to Houston. Although I've sort of leapfrogged the difficulty of flying en femme by some of my more recent accomplishments, I wasn't going to miss this chance to earn my wings in the Crossdresser Air Force. The main obstacle was handling all of the bags I took with me. Sidewalk check in at the Burbank Airport was a blessing, and I got my boarding pass without any problems.

When a woman in the gate area gave me a hard stare, I went to a nearby magazine rack and bought a romance novel. (Do you women really read this stuff?) Once on the plane I had no worries, although both

seats next to me were occupied. Changing planes in Phoenix was a breeze, and when I arrived back in Houston it was after midnight. The terminal was deserted. Only my fellow passengers from Flight 1718 saw me struggle with my bags.

Postmortem

In terms of numbers California Dreamin' is no "T" Party, nor is there the homeiness of a Tri-Ess convention. However, because each group had a personal stake in its success, petty differences and egos never raised their ugly heads.

This is important, because next year California Dreamin' moves to San Francisco and the Texas "T" Party moves to Dallas. One move was economic. The other was made to expand the responsibility network. Both conventions have done well locally under the sponsorship of one group or an alliance of groups, but now we have the opportunity to make them regional treasures. Once the consideration of the personalities of the sponsors is removed, the task of promoting the values of the groups involved can proceed in an orderly and reasonable manner.

If a convention becomes a regional responsibility, there will be no reason to panic if seed money fails to materialize at the moment needed. When that happens, there will never again be a need to pander to the lunatic fringe of the community to save our financial necks. I wish I had the money to aid and assist this process, but for now all I can do is quote the Lone Ranger, "Our work is done here, Tonto."

TRI-ESS BBS

There is a Tri-Ess Computer Bulletin Board Service operated by Rachel and Kathy Cummins in the Atlanta, Georgia, area. The board currently is open to anyone interested in "Gender" topics, regardless of organizational affiliation. There is no requirement to give any personal information about yourself when requesting full privileges on the system as it is now implemented. Some of the digitized pictures and fantasy files may contain subject material of a sexual nature and content. It is up to the user to be the judge of whether he or she wants to download from these sections. There are no rules on the board! User discretion has always been polite and there has never been a need for restrictions.

Currently there are two non-rollover phone lines into the system. The numbers are available through direct dialing or by dialing through Compuserve's PCPursuit, Starlink, and possibly other national phone access networks such as Telnet, through an Atlanta Node. They are (404) 922-2414 and (404) 785-9216. Set your modem protocols for 300 to 2400 baud, No Parity, 8 data bits and 1 stop bit. On your first check in to the system, you must log on as:

Name? Sigma Epsilon
Password? triess

Select the simple questionnaire and give a femme name you want to use on the system. It must consist of a first name and a last name. Single word names or three word names are not permitted on the system. You will then be asked for a 5 to 8 character password. Normally within 24 hours your name and password will be entered into the user list. The best way to use the system is to <R>ead <N>ew messages since the last time you were on with all <P>auses disabled. Read the messages into a text log file on your disk and read them off line, to save Long Distance charges. You can also prepare text off line and use several protocols to upload files and messages much faster than typing them on the system. Call the system when rates are low in evenings or on weekends. Let's talk!

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The Clothing Lens Effect

by Michelle Kingsbury

It is nothing new to hear someone claim that crossdressing allows a person to release his "girl within," to express those personality traits that are normally not permitted to those who are locked into the male role. (The philosophy was first expounded by Virginia Prince's Understanding Crossdressing and Bruce's "The Expression of Femininity in the Male.") According to such advocates, people are socialized into two general categories — masculinity and femininity, each of which has its own distinctive list of do's and don't's. The personalities and behaviors that go with these two categories are more or less mutually exclusive. That is, those behaviors that are reserved for the masculine category are not reserved for the feminine category, and those behaviors that are reserved for the feminine category are not reserved for the masculine category. Masculine and feminine roles function as the sum total of all the personality traits (and corresponding behaviors) that make up a particular category. To Prince's advocates, crossdressing serves to unlock the barrier which separates these two categories and allow men who are normally trapped in the masculine role to "escape" and experience the feminine role.

The basic message here is of course the androgynous ideal. One who crossdresses should be able to expand his horizons by using (albeit temporarily) the opportunity to tap both the masculine and the feminine for his desired brand of personality expression. However, one implicit message in this philosophy which may be open to question is the belief that clothing/crossdressing is necessary for experiencing this androgyny. Nor is it necessarily true that a person can only exhibit traits appropriate to his current outward appearance (that is, solely choosing from the feminine category while dressed as a woman and solely choosing from the masculine category while dressed as a man).

At least as early as the 1930's (with J.C. Flugel's The Psychology of Clothes) and the 1950's (with Lawrence Langner's The Importance of Wearing Clothes), clothing researchers have praised the value of garments in bringing about certain behaviors and attitudes within individuals. Essentially the "clothes make the man" adage, they support this common sense belief with such examples as: a man dresses as a slob, therefore he feels and acts like a slob; a woman puts on a stiff and professional suit, therefore she feels and acts like a professional; and finally, a man dresses up in soft, feminine attire, therefore he feels and acts feminine.

Such specific examples seem to be part of a general principle where clothing serves as a lens to bring out, nurture, project, and amplify personality components which are already within an individual, but for some reason are blocked, slowed, or stifled by some source (usually socially-constructed roles or norms). This is not to say that a person cannot act in a certain way without the aid of clothes. To use the above examples, there are of course well-dressed slob, casually-dressed professionals, and masculinely-dressed men who are feminine. These traits already exist within an individual to begin with, so they may be expressed at any time. However, clothing serves as a lens, to amplify these traits, to make it easier for a person to express them. (This idea can appropriately be named the "clothing lens effect.")

Why clothing functions as a lens is open to speculation. Perhaps the clothes function as a crutch, to support people through socially difficult situations. Perhaps they serve as a concrete definition or reference point on how to act, much analogous to how an individual will turn to other persons in order to define how he should act (especially in an ambiguous situation). Perhaps it is a differential treatment mechanism, where observers view a person dressed a certain way and treat him in a way that

corresponds to the schema that those clothes trigger. This in turn causes the original person to act in a way that corresponds to his clothes. Or perhaps there is some intrinsic quality of the clothing itself, such as materials or texture, that brings about specific behaviors. Whatever the explanation, the effect of clothing on behavior is a very observable phenomenon in everyday life, despite the lack of empirical research which has been devoted to the subject.

It is also unknown why clothing affects behavior in some people more than others. Perhaps it depends on some individual variable, such as that person's sensitivity to outside cues, or perhaps it depends on that person's need for a lens to help express his personality. Or it may depend on outside factors, such as how many barriers interfere with one's personality expression. Nor can we be certain why the effects of clothing on behavior tend to lessen over time for some individuals (e.g., a student with disciplinary problems despite wearing a professional uniform). The answer to this latter question, I would hypothesize, would either be simple adaptation (repeated exposure/ use dulls its power), the possibility that incompatible personality traits override the clothing lens effect (in the case of the student, he may have strong anti-conformist tendencies), or the perception that a person is being forced to dress in a certain way (people like to believe they are in control over their own destinies and rebel when they feel otherwise), thus cancelling any positive effects the clothing may bestow.

Crossdressers appear strongly sensitive to the influence of clothing on personality. Among the most common effects are increased extroversion, femininity, and self-confidence. Furthermore, they appear capable of maintaining this sensitivity over long periods of time. They dress up because they want to, not because they feel they're forced to; they usually dress up irregularly instead of every day, thus reducing adaptation effects.

Assuming that an individual can be significantly affected by clothing in the first place, there appear to be three

possible avenues this effect can take. First, the person may eventually stop expressing personality despite still dressing up in certain clothes. This can be due to adaptation of the clothing, newly-formed incompatible personality traits, the perception that he is forced to dress up, or he may discover that after trying out these new traits he does not necessarily like them. Second, the person may continue on as before, relying on the clothing as a crutch to lean on or a lens to help penetrate various barriers to personality expression. Usually in this case there is a perception that the clothes are necessary for the trait expression. This is the philosophy Prince has advocated. Third, and most important for this paper, the person may begin to internalize these new personality traits into his psyche, amplifying them and ultimately being able to express these traits on his own, without the aid of clothes.

This is the concept of "merge".

When a person who has utilized the clothing lens effect for personality amplification realizes (either consciously or unconsciously) that clothing is not a necessary condition for expressing those personality traits, he has merged. That is, feeling or behaving in a particular way is not restricted to specific times and places but can be expressed whenever and wherever the desire is present.

Crossdressing serves as a very good example to illustrate merge due to its dealing with the two more or less mutually exclusive categories of masculine and feminine. Under the clothing lens effect, crossdressing serves to amplify those (feminine) traits that are normally blocked or suppressed by socially constructed barriers. Many crossdressers, for whatever reason, cannot express these feminine behaviors without the aid of clothes, so fenced in are they to the masculine role. In addition to this, as many crossdressers temporarily enter the feminine role, they temporarily step out of the masculine role; thus while en femme, they frequently express exclusively feminine traits and leave their masculine traits behind.

When a transvestite merges, this

"either-or" distinction tends to blur. Such a person becomes capable of expressing more and more feminine traits while dressed as a man. Likewise, masculine traits begin creeping into his crossdressed state. Ultimately for the merged individual, the social barriers that separate the masculine and the feminine begin to dissolve, so that those two words become meaningless as dividers and useful only as convenient adjectives. As a result of this, a merged individual's masculine persona and femme identity will eventually fuse into one being, so that each is fully capable of feeling the same thoughts and exhibiting the same behaviors, with the only major difference between them being that one happens to wear pants and the other happens to wear skirts. For this reason, any trait or behavior is fair game (unless it is ego dystonic or was never there to begin with) in either identity, regardless of whether it is masculine or feminine.

A merged person is very similar to an androgynous person in the end result. The difference lies in the processes that were undergone to achieve this end result. The androgynous person has always been androgynous. He has expressed both masculine and feminine traits since an early age; rewards of various kinds served to ingrain each category into his psyche, thus creating his well-rounded personality. The merged person has not always been merged. His earlier life was confined to one specific set of traits, usually masculine in the case of transvestites. Through the clothing lens effect, discovered at some later point in his life, he found himself capable of broadening the amount of traits available to him. Eventually he could internalize these traits, applying them within his own psyche and being able to express his traits without the necessary aid of clothing, thus being merged.

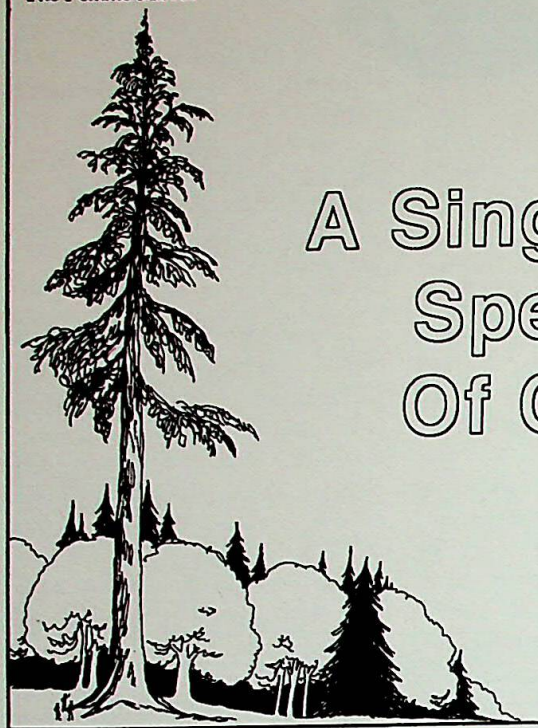
Merge is not limited to the categories of masculinity and femininity, though these are probably the most easily recognized. Merge may apply to any situation where clothing is originally used for the purpose of aiding the expression of some trait not normally in a person's psyche. This includes, but is not limited to, increasing extroversion

(common in crossdressers), loosening inhibitions (the mask and costume phenomenon), and improving discipline (the reasoning behind uniforms). The only prerequisite is that the person originally had some difficulty expressing that trait until experiencing the clothing lens effect and subsequently the internalized trait.

Once a transvestite merges his two personas, he may still crossdress for various reasons, whether they be sexual arousal (fetishism), intense identification with women (the transgenderist phenomenon), or more commonly, because some other facet of personality is still undergoing the process of merge. The last reason makes sense when one understands that merge covers not one set of personality traits but a wide range of various traits and that an individual set of clothing may influence a person on many levels. In the case of the transvestite, he may have merged his masculine and feminine personas, but women's clothing may still serve to increase extroversion or decrease other inhibitions due to the clothing lens effect. That is, he has merged on one level but not on another. Merge, therefore, is an ongoing process that will not end until all traits and behaviors can be expressed wherever and whenever, regardless of what type of clothing is being worn.

Since clothing does not only affect outward behavior but actual feelings on a personality level, I have coined the term "transformer" as a possible alternative name for those who crossdress for purposes of altering their personality for whatever reason. I use this word because crossdressing affects the person across his entire psyche, changing the very form of his being. This aptly fits with the frequent reference that most crossdressers make toward their "girl within," referring to her as a separate entity, a distinct person with a life of her own.

Ed. Note: This article originally appeared in Crossroads Chatter. It was reprinted in the Mirror several years ago, and we reprint it here because it is still one of the most valuable tools available to explain the why's and how's of crossdressing.



A Single Crossdresser Speaks To Wives Of Crossdressers

by Vicki Thomas

The taming of the American frontier was accomplished in stages. First there came the trappers, hunters, prospectors, and mountain men. These men thrived in the wilderness and scorned civilization. Next came army outposts, ranchers, and some brave entrepreneurs who turned tent cities into wide open towns. Farmers, bankers, ministers and women from good families followed. When the railroad entered these distant hamlets, commerce began, and with that sprouted culture, fine arts, and those values associated with a civilized society.

What does this have to do with crossdressing, you ask? Like geographical exploration, self discovery is also marked by stages. As wives of crossdressers, you are not unlike those women who were moved to the frontier by their husbands, with little or no input into the decision. Like them, you are exploring something new and different, far from what you thought your life would be like, and there are dangers both real and imagined. Furthermore, you are keenly aware your frontier ways would be looked down upon by polite Eastern society.

There are some benefits to being a woman on the frontier. You are accorded the highest respect, because there are so few of you willing to endure life

there, and because the religious values of that period have impacted even the most roguish citizens. Still, you are afraid.

Think of a Tri-Ess chapter as an outpost for gender equality on a frontier that demands sexual stereotypes and strict adherence to gender roles. As we approach this stage in our development, there has been a determined effort to discourage transsexual and secondary transsexual themes, because we feel your anxiety when sexual reassignment surgery is the chief topic of conversation. But, ladies, let me remind you that the state of the gender community is still very much like a frontier town with no sign of the railroad coming.

The fact that you are reading this is evidence that you are willing to try life on the frontier. The presence of other spouses is of some comfort, but you wonder if they are truly accepting, or have been compromised by their husbands. This is so because wives, like their husbands, are in different stages of development. You might see the chapter as a stone fort surrounded by Indians and wild animals, while another may see it more like Dodge City circa 1880, where ladies of good character had the freedom of the town, but didn't cross the Demarcation Line separating their respectable homes and shops from the

saloons and whorehouses catering to the trail drivers. The point to be made here is that while we are bringing dignity and decorum to these outposts of crossdressing called chapters, you as wives need to meet us halfway, with the full realization that we can only do so much for your emotional comfort, because of the parameters of the frontier we are exploring.

Singles in this analogy are, of course, the mountain men. We need the frontier town (i.e., chapter) just as much as couples, though our existence may not be confined to it. To those early frontier women, the sight of a mountain man coming inside the stockade, dressed in buckskin, speaking rough language, and smelling like he hadn't bathed in months, must have been frightening. But for the most part they were not worried that their husbands would want to drop everything and pursue a similar lifestyle.

Modern woman, whether married to a crossdresser or not, has always viewed her husband's single friends as a kind of nebulous threat. I think this is so because she has equated the difficulty men have in making commitments to an overvalued estimate of the worth we put on freedom. Moreover, the media have painted single life as glamorous and carefree, while married

life is seen as a string of arguments, followed by a set of grueling tasks and duties which must be negotiated daily.

As the wife of a crossdresser, you are presented with a double whammy, because you are put in the awkward position of hoping your husband will show restraint, and being forced to become the gatekeeper if he doesn't. Singles like me, who are able to dress as often as we want and go out as often as we like, could be seen as threats to this delicate balance. We don't mean to be, but at the same time, we want protection for our right to speak freely about our experiences outside the chapter.

Frequency of crossdressing would be a subject of argument between couples regardless of whether singles were members or not; therefore, the main issue where we as singles may unknowingly put pressure on our married sisters is in our freedom to experiment.

An article I wrote for the *Femme Forum* some time ago looked very much like I was blowing my own horn about my accomplishments in crossdressing. I assure you, I was not. In listing all my experiments and experiences, I hoped to bring the reader to the conclusion that I had arrived back where I started. That is to say, I came right back to the understanding that a heterosexual crossdresser needs both masculine and feminine expression.

I forgot that in relating some of my more questionable attempts to learn what the core identity of a crossdresser was, I might just be scaring the living day-lights out of wives afraid their husbands might want to emulate me. Through this mistake I have learned where the sensitive areas are, and as the newly elected leader of the singles segment of Tau Chi Chapter, I will work hard to educate other singles on the concerns of spouses and significant others.

Likewise, I would hope that wives would have a little more faith in their husbands. All roads simply don't lead to transsexualism. When a crossdressing husband wishes to do some experimentation, the wife should ask whether this act will put the reputation of the family

at risk, or be so repugnant as to cause emotional distress. Any other response is an admission that the wife has not dealt with her own fears. Simply digging in one's heels and saying no won't help in the long run if your husband is predisposed to turn transsexual.

I am single because time and circumstance have made me so. I was once married, had a good job, and felt tremendous anxiety about my crossdressing. Now all three of those factors in my life have been erased. The only positive to come out of my loss is that instead of having guilt feelings over my crossdressing, I have developed both a desire to help others and, at the same time, to explore the limits of crossgender expression. To quote Martin Luther King, Jr., "I've been to the mountaintop." I'm here to tell you that we really can compartmentalize our gender roles, and in effect, hang one gender role on the wall while we are in the other, if we want to.

As wives, you should realize that chapters are not the end game, nor are crossdressing conventions. Chapters are the start of a pipeline. They have to operate with the needs of the newest wife and the most novice crossdresser in mind. Individual growth, acceptance, and enjoyment of our feminine side is something that neither chapters nor conventions can adequately address. Each crossdresser must bear the responsibility of meeting his own needs. This is both wise and prudent.

The good news for wives is that for the crossdresser who is married or in a committed relationship, there is a need for the wife's approval that is just as strong as the desire to crossdress itself. Your opinion and acceptance can influence growth and freedom from guilt as much as anything else.

Let's face it. When a crossdresser looks in the mirror or examines the difference between his dress size and yours, he can feel discouraged and become just as negative about his crossdressing as any disapproving spouse. You can take the easy way out, and feed his adolescent perception of femininity as completely defined by external beauty and grace, or you can

take the much harder road of encouraging him to be more feminine in both mind and manner.

This is a giant hoop through which both wives and crossdressers have difficulty in jumping, but for different reasons. For the crossdresser, it comes back to the old "sissy" business, as explained by Virginia Prince in the Summer 1994 *Femme Mirror*. For the wife, the identification with her husband as a man may be so ingrained that it is difficult, if not impossible, to suspend belief that the person in the dress next to her is anyone other than her husband. We can understand this reliance on each other in new members. Abandonment of individuality in marriage is seen as a virtue by one school of thought. However, because the crossdressing experience is so much more than just wearing feminine clothes, approaching a chapter meeting as just another social evening you attack as a couple, is nothing less than denying the crossdresser a chance to touch the intangible essence of the moment, which can, if allowed, be akin to an out-of-body experience.

Tri-Ess and the chapter system were born at a time when crossdressing was illegal. Much has changed since then, but there is a bunker mentality that still remains with us despite the fact that we have much more freedom to go out in public than we once did. To be sure, we still need to be in the business of finding new members and convincing them that the chapter is a safe haven from discovery. Moreover, our purpose should be one of educating both the public and new members of what it means to be a crossdresser.

However, for reasons which can't all be blamed on the turmoil and infighting that has gone on in the gender community, both Tri-Ess and Tau Chi Chapter have become organizations of old veterans and new members with less than two years' experience. My contention is that we have led our members to the water hole, but have not given them the confidence to drink from it. We end up either with people who are content to merely enjoy the friendships of other crossdressers, or with those who want to be little Napoleons,

The Femme Mirror
who want to grab power and transform
the organization into one meeting their
needs only.

Singles see the need for a new vision for Tri-Ess and its chapters, because those of us who have put the responsibility for growth on our own shoulders see that so much more is possible. To sustain interest, members need to feel like they are really trying their feminine wings. In order to do so, a small leap of fantasy is required. Ideally, while couples acknowledge their love for each other, they should resolve to behave like sisters. By far the biggest violation hurting the atmosphere of a "women-only" gathering is the use of the word "Honey" or other pet names couples have for each other. I've searched the membership rolls, and I've yet to find a member named Honey. So next time I hear the word, don't be surprised if I bring you a jar of Burleson's.

Singles truly want to coexist with the married members of the chapters. Even someone like me, who has lost all hope of ever being married again, prays for a miracle. In the meantime I thank God for the opportunity to help people confront their crossdressing needs. Moreover, I take pride in my own accomplishments in learning what it is really like to be a woman, before even considering the question of taking hormones. But I say to you ladies with matching gender and sex that, despite what I have accomplished, it is the simple, uncomplicated touch of another human being that gives life meaning.

Loneliness was the price paid for being a mountain man. For now, that is what I see as my own role. The mountain man was one who could be counted on to bring accurate intelligence of any possible threats coming from outside the fort, one who could talk to the Indians on their level and start the treaty-making process, and one whose tall tales over the dinner table sent the settlers to bed dreaming about vast new lands in the West waiting to be plowed.

*ED.NOTE: Vicki's article first appeared in the Femme Forum, newsletter of Tau Chi Chapter. Vicki is a long-time chapter member and a former editor of the Femme Forum.
Summer 1995*

A Sack of Gold For Your Petticoat, Ma'am?

by Cindy N. AZ-2817-N

Many tales have been told about the gold rush days of the 1850's. Tales abound steeped in legend and mystery, from the lone prospector such as the Lost Dutchman, Jacob Walz, who never did reveal the location of his now famous mine, to tales of lost treasure chests which, to this day, have never been found.

We have also read stories of how the miners amused themselves. On Saturday nights, the miners could be found in town, visiting the bawdy houses, playing faro, or drinking themselves into oblivion while watching the fandango dancers whirl on the stages of the local saloons. On these nights, the gold dust flowed as freely as the whiskey.

But, there were very few women to be found in the mining camps. According to the sad refrain in one diary: "Saturday night and no place to go a courting - God bless the ladies. . . . Would that they were here in the mines by the score. . . ." Then, it is puzzling to read on the next page where the same miner wrote, "Danced cotillions 'till after midnight." The answer is that certain miners, the ones with patches on their pants, were designated "ladies" for the purpose of the cotillion. At Nevada City's first ball, early in 1850, there were twelve ladies to three hundred men. The ladies came from all over the country, in clean bright cotton dresses and plaid silk or wool shawls, and their best high calf boots. In order to supply dancing partners for the other men, a number of the men tied handkerchiefs around their arms and airily assumed the character of ballroom belles. If any of our group had been there, I'm sure we could have done much better than that.

The miners of the wild west came from all over the world. California, especially, seemed to have a heavy Spanish influence. The miners practiced many sports to relieve the boredom: shooting matches, hunts, horse races, and bull fights. Before one such sporting event, handbills were distributed all over town announcing that Senorita Ramona Perez would duel with the bull. However, it proved to be more bull than senorita. When the matador stepped into the ring, she was "very well got up as a woman" except for the moustache, which he had not thought it worth while to sacrifice. He had a fan in his hand with which he half concealed his face, as if from modesty, as he curtsied to the audience. They received him with shouts of laughter along with hisses and curses. ". . . The Senorita played with the bull for some little time with the utmost of feminine grace, whisking her petticoats in the bull's face with one hand, whilst she smoothed down her hair with the other." At last she daintily dug the sword into the back of the bull's neck and ran out of the arena, curtsying, and kissing her hand to the spectators.

The role of the female impersonator in the gold rush country is only rarely mentioned. However, we do know that men dressed as women on stage sometimes, but I have rarely heard mention of any other type of cross gender activity. Where were all the crossdressers in this era? Perhaps gold fever overcame the lure of the multilayered petticoats. If you had lived during this era, would you have given your sack of gold for the opportunity to dress in the lacy petticoats and colorful dresses of the time? I probably would have!

ED.NOTE: Cindy's article is reprinted from the Cactus Flower, newsletter of Alpha Zeta Chapter, of which Cindy is editor.



The Other Side

by Roger E. Peo, Ph.D.

(Ed.Note: This is one of the earlier "Roger's Notebook" columns. In re-reading this piece, we are reminded once again of the immense loss suffered by our community when Roger passed away last year. This column, dealing with the wives of crossdressers, is just a sample of Roger's insight and empathy. We would certainly like to see all the "Roger's Notebook" columns gathered and published in one book.)

I recently completed a study of 55 women who were in current relationships with transvestites, and I want to tell you their story. My intent is to describe the woman's view of a relationship between a woman and a man who crossdresses. The most striking insight that came from my study was how isolated and misunderstood such women are. Any male who crossdresses knows first-hand the anxiety and isolation that goes with his behavior, especially in the early years. There is always some concern about being discovered. Can you imagine how the woman feels?

To begin with, she may have a hard time understanding why a male would want to wear women's clothing. For her it is her normal clothing, and usually has no special feeling associated with it. When you add to this confusion her concern that her partner's crossdressing might become public knowledge, she can be in a terrified state. She may also worry about being a lesbian and about her partner being gay. Because crossdressing is not generally accepted in this society, she may be afraid to confide in anyone, because so far as she is concerned her partner's behavior reflects on her. What will people think of her if she tells them her partner likes to wear women's clothes?

Further, many counselors and therapists do not understand cross-gender behaviors and so may be of little help to her. Or, they may switch their

attention to her partner because he is "more interesting".

In addition, there is little information available to her to help her understand his behavior or her own feelings. If she reads typical transvestite literature, she may think that the fantasies in them are real and that her partner wants to become a full-time woman and leave her. Thus the social stigma attached to cross-dressing coupled with a lack of interest serves to isolate her.

These women and their partners were (from outside appearances) typical middle class couples. Only about half of the women and about half of the men had ever been in counseling for any reason. The women in my study were probably not typical of many women who have a crossdressing partner, because most of them had some connection with an organization that supported crossdressing males.

The women said that their partner's crossdressing needs often put strains on the relationship, but they stayed because they loved him and/or because their relationship had other aspects that were good — balancing out the negative aspects of the cross-dressing. There appeared to be an undertone in some responses which indicated that it would be difficult for the woman to leave the relationship because she was economically and/or socially trapped.

Another finding that was significant (keep in mind that the women in my study had chosen to stay in the relationship) was the earlier in their relationship the male told her about his crossdressing, the more probable it was that she was accepting (to some degree) of his behavior. Just when she was told (or should be told) was not clear. The women who were told about the crossdressing in the first year and definitely before marriage or living together

were the most tolerant. Also, the more likely it was that she would elect to stay in the relationship — if she had a choice.

Her acceptance or tolerance of the cross-dressing should not be confused with enjoyment or encouragement. What it probably meant was that she had come to terms with the cross-dressing. High on the list of support available to partners of crossdressers were the other women she met through the wives groups that were associated with cross-dressing organizations. Unfortunately, most of the women in my study did not find about these other women until after the initial disclosure, which meant they were isolated for some period of time — perhaps years.

Now I have heard some crossdressers say that what their partner thinks or feels is immaterial as long as she totally accepts his crossdressing needs, or gets out of the way so that he can be free to express himself. My belief is that all relationships have to be built on a mutual give-and-take arrangement if they are to survive in a meaningful way.

What many of the women in my study said was that they were as supportive of their partners' needs as they knew how to be, but their men often did not consider their needs or feelings. This study highlights areas of the women's concerns that can be talked over between the two people in order to find a mutually acceptable solution for their relationship. So it seems quite possible that crossdressers can "have their cake and eat it too," because with a little perception and concessions they can continue to be in a relationship with a supportive woman and still enjoy the pleasures of crossdressing.



Is the Community Coming of Age ?

by Carol Ann Lee

There seems to be a fresh, bright spirit emerging from within our community. And this writer knows she is not solitary in her outlook. She has also heard very similar views voiced by others within and involved with the gender community.

By now, you are probably asking yourself, "What is she talking about?" What I am talking about is the new wave of pride that seems to be sweeping over my sisters. Even though this pride has manifested itself in a number of different variations, it has had a cumulative effect of seemingly, greater tolerance and even acceptance by the general public. In the forefront of these efforts, today's sisters seem far more interested in dressing and acting like ladies than they are in passing, when out in the public eye. The short and outlandish outfits are slowly disappearing and being replaced by dignified and refined attire. The outcome has been that the jeers and laughter are slowly being replaced by compliments.

I am reminded of a recent experience had while shopping en femme at a local mall. I was on my way to a chapter meeting when I realized I hadn't replaced the earrings that had pulled out while I was getting dressed. A drive back home to retrieve them would have meant an hour lost. I had to carefully weigh my options as it was early Saturday evening and the area I was in had no little shops, just malls, meccas for teenagers. This was all too familiar to me, as I hadn't shopped as Carol since I got read and laughed out of a K-Mart five years ago. But, I decided it was time to put this new found poise and confidence that I claim Tri-Ess and my sisters have given me.

So I was off to a mall. I selected a smaller mall on Route 4. I drove into the parking lot and looked at the possibilities. There was an Annie Sez, a store whose managers have openly accepted crossdressers after hours. Sounds a little too easy, so what does Carol Ann

decide to do but walk into one of the busiest Caldors (similar to Wal-Mart, K-Mart, etc.) in the state.

Once inside, I went straight to the jewelry department and walked through racks upon racks of earrings. It was then that I noticed that I wasn't shaking, I wasn't looking over my shoulder and nobody was looking at me! So far, so good. I found a beautiful pair of dangling hearts. After all, I was on the way to a Valentine Party.

I had the earrings, but what about the checkout? Could Carol Ann make it through the checkout without going to pieces? I arrived at the checkout to find that I was fourth in line. "Stay calm, dear," I told myself. Excruciatingly, the line moved forward. Finally, it was my turn. I handed the young female cashier the earrings and she rang them up.

Then came the only thing that caught me off guard. The earrings had a price tag of \$4.99 on them and I had handed the cashier a \$20 bill. The register said they were on sale and only cost 99¢. The cashier looked at me and very sweetly said, "Do you have a dollar bill, dear?" I smiled and nodded and went into my change purse and retrieved the dollar bill and she gave my twenty back with a penny change from the dollar. I walked out, still fumbling with my pocketbook, like all women do and really had to resist the temptation to do a little touchdown dance on the way.

When I got back to the car, I wondered if I had been read. If I had, I have no way of knowing. There were no snickers or accusations. Then I experienced a little empty feeling inside because, in a way, I sincerely wished I had been read. It would have meant those who did, accepted what they saw. I have to believe I was. It was the wrong place, the wrong time, and I wasn't wearing the "shopping uniform" (sweat shirt, sweat pants and dirty sneakers). I was in a stylish red suit and a long red

coat very suitable for wearing to the office but not to a K-Mart, and felt that I should have stood out.

But, then again, a sister pointed out to me that I wasn't overdressed for a woman who was on her way somewhere important and decided to stop to pick up a few things. There is more truth in that statement than she realizes. Even though I am only 5'8", I still dwarfed the women in front of me at the checkout. The point that I'm trying to get across is that I would have much preferred being read and accepted than to have not been read at all.

You have probably heard me say this before, but it bears repeating. If you look like a lady and you act like one, you will be treated like one. Hopefully, the days of those who want to "out-female" the female are numbered. I have always wondered about those garish types. If a young, good-looking, genetic female who is dressed like a hooker is disdained by decent people, what hope does an "ugly", 40+ year-old, two hundred and fifty pound linebacker dressed in a miniskirt with grossly oversized breasts have?

On the other side of the coin, it always feels unquestionably good to be complimented by your sisters on how well you look. Then just think of how euphoric it would feel to receive the very same compliment from a perfect stranger! Again, I feel compelled to thank those wonderful sisters who preceded me who paved a long way down a very bumpy road.

To answer the question posed by this editorial's title, "Yes." The journey is far from over but its conclusion may be looming, just over the horizon. As always, if you have any comment, complaint, suggestion or just need a shoulder to lean on, feel free to contact me at

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(Reprinted from *News Briefs* 3/95.)

How Nature Makes Men Out of Women

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON © Researchers have isolated a genetic switch that separates the boys from the girls. It turns off the female in the human embryo and starts biological changes that eventually put hair on the chest. Dr. Michael Weiss of the University of Chicago said the new study advances the understanding of the complex cascade that determines whether people are male or female and sheds new light on how this process can sometimes go awry.

In research published in the journal *Science*, Weiss and his team used sophisticated imaging techniques to explore on an atomic level the biological pathway to manhood. Their research report traces the development of maleness, from the turning on of the SRY gene, which is on the Y chromosome, to the work of another gene, called MIS, that removes the female parts of the original embryo. Weiss said that science has long known that everybody at conception is female, but that the precise biological mechanism that changes an embryo to male is still incompletely understood.

Solving the puzzle on the molecular level may answer questions about other basic cellular changes, such as the development of cancer. For the first weeks after conception, all mammal embryos start forming the basic female structures: uterus, fallopian tubes and vagina.

"The embryo destined to become a boy begins as a female," Weiss said in an interview. "It lays down first female structures and not male structures at a phase when the embryo looks like a recognizable mammal, with toes, fingers, eyes and a heart. This is 35 to 40 days into human gestation." After that, he said, the SRY gene switches on to start the embryo on its way toward manhood. The new study shows that SRY also triggers the work of the MIS gene, which dissolves the female parts of the original embryo.

"SRY is the master switch," Weiss said. For the first time, we have shown that SRY can activate a male specific pattern of gene expression leading to activation of MIS, which is the key signaling molecule for half of the male pathway."

Sex determination in mammals originates with the chromosome of the sperm that fertilizes the egg. Male sperm can carry one of two chromosomes, X or Y. The Y chromosome is the male element that carries the SRY gene. The female egg has an X chromosome. If the egg is fertilized with the father's X chromosome, then the embryo continues its development as a female. But if the egg is fertilized with Y, the SRY gene sets off a series of changes that eventually creates a male.

"The XY embryo (containing the X chromosome from the mother's egg and the Y chromosome from the father's

sperm) has two critical tasks to accomplish," Weiss said. "The first is to build male organs. The second is to cause the female structures to go away." In experiments on embryonic mice, Weiss and his team used nuclear magnetic resonance images to show that the SRY gene sends chemical signals to the MIS gene. The MIS gene then causes the nascent female organs in the embryo to disappear. SRY also starts the growth of testicles, which in turn, start making testosterone, the hormone that causes development of male characteristics: the penis, masculine-like muscles and, eventually, facial hair.

Weiss said that a flaw in the work of the MIS gene is responsible for the so-called sex-reversed female, which occurs once in every 50,000 births. Sex reversed females have the XY gene combination that normally is found only in males, but they have the physical characteristics of females, lacking only functioning ovaries. These women never have menstruation, because they produce no eggs. But they are capable of having babies through hormone shots and implantation in the uterus of donated fertilized eggs.

Much of the research reported in *Science* comes from studies Weiss conducted while at Harvard Medical School in Boston. Other members of the research team are still at Harvard.

(*Science* is the journal of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.)



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"Transvestite Terrorizes Town"

A Story by Sofronia Anne Strong MN-3264 G

The above headline appeared across the top of the second section of the Minneapolis Journal on August 12, 1951, when was 20 years old.

I often read in present day crossdressing magazines and publications that we crossdressers are harmless, that gender diversity is a normal statistical phenomenon, that it is both pan-cultural and pan-his-toric, and that we are just a nice bunch of ordinary guys who have this thing for wearing women's clothes. All these assertions are, of course, true, but I remember a time when people thought otherwise about trans-vestites (which was the proper word for it, back then.) The conventional wisdom was that we were queer and/or perverted. (Both of these words are now archaic as well, thank God.)

Being a young crossdresser, going to a small liberal arts college (dressing there is another story) I knew perfectly well that by being a crossdresser I was one degree worse than being a serial killer or a drug fiend (another archaic term.)

I was home for the summer when I found the story. What shocked me most was that the paper had printed the story at all. Even Christine Jorgensen had not happened yet, and stories about sexual perverts did not generally reach print in a paper based on family values. I was a young, closeted crossdresser, and didn't even know our state had an archaic law prohibiting crossdressing. I knew some did, but I did not know which, or what they were. I just assumed it was illegal. I was going to school in another state. The shocking article ran as follows:

TRANVESTITE TERRORIZES TOWN: MAN SEEN IN DRESS AT CONCERT

This reporter, following his usual beat at city hall, took note of an entry on the police blotter. A married couple, Howard and Cinderella Mussentuchee, had filed a complaint with the police in which they alleged that the lady seated next to them at last night's performance of Mahler's Fourth Symphony by the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra in Northrup Auditorium, had, in fact been a man.

Asked by the responding officers why they thought their concert neighbor had been a guy in drag, Mrs. Mussentuchee said that she just had a feeling about it. "There was just something phony about it," she replied. "He..she...the thing was just too well dressed, just somehow too stylish." When Mr. Mussentuchee was asked for his impression of the mysterious concert-goer, he said he too thought the lady in the next seat might have been a man in drag, but he found her very attractive, gracious. "She was quite lovely," he commented, "and her perfume had my head spinning."

Mrs. Mussentuchee said that after the intermission she had changed seats with her husband so that she was sitting between him and the "lady" next door. Mrs. Mussentuchee said she was convinced that their neighbor had an adam's apple.

The Mussentuchee's are well known symphony orchestra sustaining sponsors. Mr. Mussentuchee is President of the Pine

Tree Savings and Loan Association.

Sgt. Roberts, the night desk sergeant on Friday evening, said he had turned the complaint over to Sgt. Monica of the Gender Squad. This reporter interviewed Sgt. Monica on Saturday morning. The Gender Squad is an adjunct of the police Vice Squad and handles all complaints concerning alleged transvestism.

Sgt. Monica told us that the squad handles fewer than a dozen complaints a year and is quite unable to verify most complaints. She said that only two cases have come to court under the state's seventy nine year old statute that prohibits men from wearing female attire. It was originally designed to prosecute felons who attempted to flee dressed as women, but has long been interpreted in the courts as applying to men in women's clothing for whatever reason. Most of them are queer, the sergeant told us.

The prescribed sentence, we learned, was originally designed to shame perpetrators and make them publicly identifiable to the police. The usual sentence is a court order to appear in public in female specific attire only, for a period of three to five years. Enforcement is left to probation officers and the Gender Squad.

Asked about the well-dressed concert goer, Sgt. Monica read from the complaint, which described the perpetrator as being dressed in what Mrs. Mussentuchee described as a New Look Evening gown, probably a Dior knock-off, with a wide, flowing skirt underpinned with a petticoat, a cinched waist, and an



off the shoulder bodice with a large satin bow on one shoulder. She said that the "lady" also wore silver Spring-o-lator backless pumps with very high heels, and that she introduced herself as Cynthia.

Mrs. Mussentuchee also reported that the "person" was obviously wearing the currently fashionable waist cinch and showed large bust development, undoubtedly wrought by one of those conical brassieres worn under the current fashions. Sgt. Monica reports that there have been several sightings of this Cynthia person, and if he keeps it up the Gender Squad will probably apprehend him before long. We were able to obtain from court records the names of two men in Minneapolis presently serving out sentences in dresses and tresses, but as of this writing have not been able to locate either one.

Clearly, it was not as easy to be a crossdresser forty-five years ago as it is now. I clipped the story and tried to forget about it. My own feeling at the time was that the less people, especially the papers, spoke and wrote about us, the better off we were. A few days later, just about Labor Day, a second article appeared in the back half of the paper, by the same reporter.

TWO CONVICTED TRANVESTITES FOUND

This reporter has located the two transvestites under sentence to appear in public in female dress, but neither was willing to make any statement other than the fact that they are diligent in compliance, always being careful to comport themselves as stylish ladies whenever they leave the house. Neither was willing to give an interview to this paper. A check with their probation officer revealed that both are considered to be model probationers and whenever checked upon have made an ex-



cellent appearance as women, never complaining of the limitations placed upon them by their enforced effeminacy.

In a further interview with Sgt. Monica she told us, "You'd almost think these guys liked having to mince about in heels and hose. If the sentence to always appear in dresses and tresses is supposed to cure them of it, I can't see that it works. You'd expect these guys to dodge it, but they don't." Sgt. Monica's remark seems incomprehensible to us, for it is apparent that the most shameful and degrading thing happen to any red-blooded man would be to find himself sentenced to wearing lingerie, makeup and skirts.

We find the reticence of both of these criminals to be interviewed entirely understandable. They have to be living under a hellish cloud of shame. We found one of

them, a Mr. Whittaker, in his office at the Benchon Grain Co. in the Minneapolis Grain Exchange, dressed in a blue silk dress with white pin-dots, blue suede high heeled pumps, and a Lily Dache' hat with a touch of veiling. His make-up was impeccable as was his page boy coiffure, which lay upon his shoulders.

When asked how he happened to be caught by the Gender Squad in women's wear, he said the Gender Squad had raided a private halloween costume party he was attending. Asked how his office colleagues viewed his feminine appearance, he said they all understood he only crossdressed because of the sentence. We noticed a finely wrought leather purse and a pair of white gloves lying on Mr. Whittaker's desk.

The other parolee is a Mr. Charles Nelson, who is retired.

Summer 1995

We found him at home, *en negligee*. He told us that he had been arrested in costume after a performance of a comedy, in which he had been playing a farcical woman's part at the Community Theatre. He said he had not changed out of his costume, but had worn it home after the last performance. His auto had been stopped for a tail light violation and he had been turned in to the Gender Squad the next day. We asked him why he was dressed *en negligee* while at home and he advised us that he was getting ready to go out.

We congratulate the Gender Squad for apprehending these perverts and subjecting them to public scrutiny. Real men and ladies should not be subjected to the terror these weirdoes must strike in their hearts. Respectable citizens are rightfully insulted by the sight of a man in a frock. Both of these transvestites are married and have had children. Why any man who is not homosexual should degrade himself by wearing women's clothing is a curious question.

I was too young and naive to answer that question myself. All I knew was that I loved to crossdress, and I lived in terror of anyone finding it out. The articles really shook me up. The weekend before I was scheduled to leave for school the third in the enterprising series of articles appeared.



TRANVESTITE CYNTHIA APPREHENDED: YOUNG VIOLATOR SEIZED ON PARKWAY

The mysterious transvestite, Cynthia, who has been terrorizing citizens at concerts, in restaurants and other venues in recent months has been apprehended by the Park Police and turned over to the Gender Squad. The culprit will be arraigned on charges of gender-bending tomorrow. He is presently out on bail. It is expected that the culprit will enter a guilty plea and receive the usual three to five year sentence requiring him to appear in public in female dress only.

The police apprehended Cedric Hoskins for a stop sign violation on Minnehaha Parkway near Lyndale Ave. about 11:30 PM. When stopped, he could not produce a driver's license. The officers were suspicious when he gave his name as Cynthia Morton, but had no ID. He was wearing a light blue taffeta cocktail dress, very stylish, with silver pumps. The officers said the disguise was exceedingly convincing. His true identity was determined from a license plate check. The car was registered to his father, William Hoskins.



The city is at last relieved of this dreadful creature who has mocked us all lately, and we can only hope that a life as a forced transvestite for the next several years will teach him a lesson: a transvestite is an insult to all decent citizens.

After an hour in jail in my taffeta cocktail dress, dad bailed me out. I was convicted on the testimony of the arresting officers, and sentenced to the full five years in dresses and tresses. Immediately thereafter, I got out of the state, back to school, where the story had not been seen. I stayed out of Minnesota for the five years and nothing more was ever heard about it. My big sister, perfect snot that she was, told me that when she got married she would ask me to be her maid. I told her I would be delighted. It shut her up.

I want to tell you that it is a lot easier being a crossdresser today than it was when I was a young "lady". You young crossdressers don't know how good you have it nowadays. Minnesota passed a law in 1993 protecting all transgendered persons from discrimination. My, how things have changed.



Hey, Good Looking!

More helpful hints and How-To's here!!

We've gleaned some of the best from newsletters, but we'd like to hear from you, the readers.

Do you have a beauty secret to share?

Fashion Report by: NEWS BRIEFS Staff May 1995 Issue

Champagne Dressing on a Beer Budget

Problem: You want to look chic, well-dressed and professional, but your clothing budget seems to shrink by the minute and a shopping binge is just out of the question.

What do you do?

Try getting your hands on a copy of the book Dress Like a Million (on Considerably Less) by Leah Feldon (Villard Books). She presents proven theories on color, proportion and design in a strategy that will have you looking like a million for hundreds and hundreds of thousands less. As Feldon states in her book's introduction, "This decade we're going to have to put ourselves together with more imagination and less cash and that means fine-tuning our improvisational skills."

The secret to dressing well on a budget is to decide on the look you want to attain and then to work on arriving at it. In order to accomplish this, you first have to learn to maximize your good points and minimize your faults. Vertical lines have a definite slimming effect, curved lines communicate, "femi-

nine," and horizontal lines tend to broaden, except when well above or below the waist. Deep, V-shape necklines (if you can attain the cleavage) and low-knotted long scarves make short necks appear longer. Cowl necks, turtle-necks and long, dangling earrings make short necks appear even shorter.

To narrow broad shoulders, avoid or remove the shoulder pads and opt for soft, draping sleeves. If you are thick-waisted, select dark neutrals and accent with an eye-catching accessory near your face. Shun gathers and pleats. Shop at stores specializing in larger women's sizes because the designers continually integrate slimming fundamentals in their creations.

Feldon acquiesces with the color theories of the '80s and feels they should be carried even further in the frugal '90s. She suggests limiting the number of colors in your wardrobe to five or six. It will make shopping less complex and make it easier to coordinate different pieces, including your handbags, shoes, etc. She advises concentrating on one or two neutrals that you can select your

skirts, slacks and jackets from and then color accenting with blouses and sweaters.

Go for the high grade fabrics. In the long run, a few quality items are far better cheaper copies. Unfortunately, the better fabrics also require dry-cleaning but you can save a few dollars by doing your own spot-cleaning and pressing.

With this set of guidelines in hand, Feldon proposes that you "build your wardrobe around a limited set of styles, lines and colors that are perfectly suited to your body, personality and lifestyle and sticking to them."

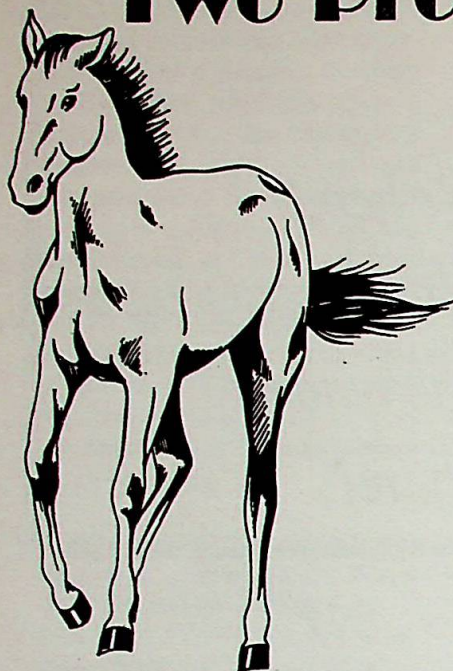
When you do shop, be on the lookout for a few quintessential pieces that are befitting of your appearance, go well with what you already own, fits comfortably and makes you feel, nothing short of, fabulous.



Summer 1995

Two Products That Work!

by Cho-Cho*



Not being given to testimonials, I often keep personal care and makeup secrets to myself. Jo Ann Roberts' and others' tips are often where I find good ideas, so I think to myself, "Why compete?" However, I have learned of two good personal care products that are cheap, work well and will help many of us either in our femme or our masculine roles.

I have very thin, brittle nails that break easily. My nails are so thin they often break of their own accord without warning. I tried many methods, including sculptured nails, looking for help without success.

Some time ago, a friend told me that she began using Straight Arrow's Hoofmaker for her own nails after discovering that they looked so much better after rubbing the compound into horses' hooves. As I looked at her nails, I saw that they were, in fact, long, smooth and strong even without polish. While I did not immediately run out and buy it, I kept the idea in back of my mind.

About three months ago, I finally, purchased a bottle of Hoofmaker after seeing it in a tack store. I began a program of applying a small amount to my nails twice a day, paying special attention to the cuticle area. Following Summer 1995

the instructions for hooves, I spread the creamy lotion on my nails leaving a light coat that was soon absorbed and dried. It wasn't long until I noticed that my nails began to look smoother with smooth edges that would not snag or catch. In addition, I soon realized that they were not breaking as easily as before. After a few months of religiously using it, my nails no longer split and seem thicker and stronger. They may still break, but only under stress, not just by themselves as they had done in the past.

The good news about Hoofmaker is that it can be used every day, even those days when you have to be "him." Because it is not a polish Hoofmaker will not change a nail's appearance or create a shine. Instead, it gives nails the appearance of fine buffing without the effort of really buffing.

Another animal care product that this same lady recommended was Bag Balm. This is a greasy mix made from petroleum jelly laced with a liberal amount of disinfectant and sold as an emollient for cow udders. The label reads, "For chapped teats, superficial scratches, windburn and sunburn." The lady who recommended it to me uses it as a hand cream to soften her hands. She said to apply a liberal amount to the hands before bedtime and then put on

surgical gloves to protect the sheets. I've tried it and believe me, you'll need the gloves.

I was convinced that her testimony for Bag Balm was true because, her hands were smooth and wrinkle free, despite a great deal of housework and of hard work in and around barns.

I can attest that the balm will hasten the healing of cuts and scratches. I once tested the product when I scratched both hands. I spread Bag Balm on one scratched hand and not on the other. The hand that was treated with Bag Balm healed quickly without scarring or even scabbing over. The other hand took much longer to heal and the scratches left scars that are still visible to this day.

The best news of all is that both products are cheap. A sixteen ounce bottle of Hoofmaker, which would probably last for at least a year, costs about \$6.00 in an animal supply or tack store. Bag Balm sells, in the same places, for about \$5.00 for a large 10 ounce can. Both products are, sometimes, carried in variety stores such as Walmart.

If you have problem nails as I do, try Straight Arrows's Hoofmaker and see if you like it. I keep Bag Balm in my medicine cabinet and look for it often.



Ask The Dermatologist

by Jane Ellen Fairfax, M.D.

The largest organ in the body bedevils many crossdressers. It sprouts forth dark hairs which cry, "Testosterone made me!" It over-pigments, under-pigments, itches, hurts, give rise to blisters, crusts, papules, pustules, scales, flakes, plaques and nodules. Exposed to the sun, it withers, thins and wrinkles. Still, it is the body's first line of defense against hostile organisms and influences from the environment. With proper care, however, it will make the appearance more attractive and even more feminine. It is the purpose of this column to answer questions about this organ to make it the best possible easel on which to draw your feminine image.

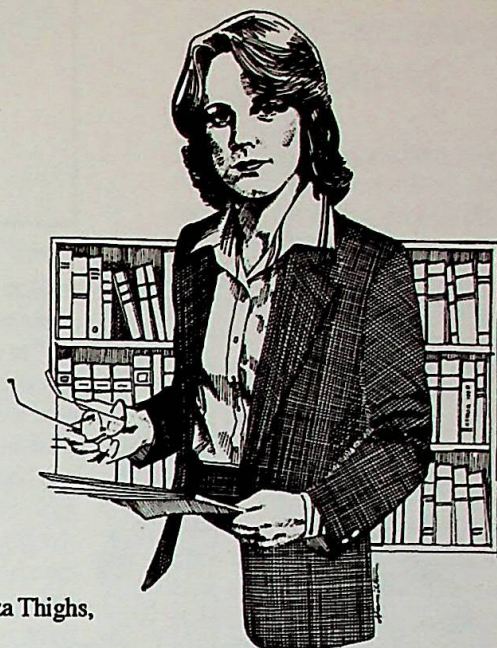
As a Board Certified Dermatologist who has been in practice since 1977, I have had experience in dealing with the vagaries of the skin. Although my special interest is AIDS Dermatology, I see all sorts of dermatological conditions. Dermatology is a most fulfilling occupation, full of variety. The practice of dermatology is indeed a high form of art.

Before embarking upon this column, I will lay down one or two basic principles. Dermatology is a visual specialty. It is absolutely impossible to diagnose a condition without seeing it. Sometimes consultation with a pathologist is necessary to make a diagnosis. Nothing I say in this column will substitute for a visit with a trained specialist. The words, "it sounds like" will probably be frequently used. Needless to say, I will not prescribe any medicines, nor I will discuss problems in fields outside dermatology. My purpose in writing this column will be to answer questions about skin care, especially as it applies to gender-gifted people. I'll be happy to answer questions about products or ingredients, or skin, hair, or nail diseases. Staying pretty depends on having healthy skin. With that in mind, I will tackle the first question.

Dear Dermatologist:

If I don't shave my legs regularly (at least once a week) I get tiny white head pimples on my thighs. If I pop them the spots get red and take a long time to fade away. I still have a few discolored marks from the last time this happened. Are these pimples caused by in-grown hairs? They only occur after my leg hair has grown out for several days, then, if I don't get out the razor they start popping up. Other than regular shaving, which I don't mind in the least, is there anyway to stop these things?

(signed) Pizza Thighs.



Dear Pizza Thighs,

It sounds as if you may be having folliculitis, a superficial bacterial infection around the hair follicles. Possibly the hairs are becoming ingrown after shaving, a condition known as Pseudofolliculitis. The trapped hair acts as a foreign body, provoking an inflammatory response. In this condition, you may actually see ingrown hairs covered by a thin layer of red, inflamed skin. You are absolutely right not to manipulate these areas! Inflammation caused by "popping" may leave blood tattooing or pigmentation that can last as long as a year. Manipulating these areas may colonize them with staph bacteria from the fingernails, and may even cause permanent scarring.

To prevent these lesions, you might try shaving with an electric razor. Since you will not shave as closely, there will be less chance for hairs to ingrow. When shaving you should avoid using any oily or greasy lotions either before or afterwards. These block the entrances to the follicles and create a stagnant pool of oil, which bacteria find most nourishing. Gently washing the skin with Dial Gold before shaving will discourage their ardor. Your dermatologist can give you a prescription for topical Erythromycin which, used once daily, should improve the problem greatly. It is not particularly expensive, nor is it a frequent cause of contact allergies.

Your statement that shaving improves these lesions gives rise to another possibility. You might check the skin on the upper outer arms to see whether the follicle mouths have a rough, scaly material in their centers. If so, you have probably got Keratosis Pilaris, a hereditary condition in which the follicle mouths are plugged with skin cells. When severe, the problem feels almost like sandpaper or goose bumps. Lac-Hydrin, a relatively inexpensive lotion prescribed by a dermatologist, will frequently work on this problem. Sometimes the dermatologist will add Sulfacet Lotion or Retin-A at bedtime. Since this is a hereditary condition, you will have to stay on these topical medications to keep a satisfactory result. Please rest assured, Pizza Thighs, that many times I sausage problems in my practice. It is important to deal with them properly so that they do not mushroom!



Ask Marylou

by Marylou Luther

fashion-driven than shirts, which are a staple enough item to warrant such "extras" as choices in sleeve lengths. There is a polyester crepe de chine blouse-cum-shirt in the Tall Classics catalog (800-345-1958) that might be ideal for you because it's a tall size, plus it made with French cuffs. If you find the sleeves aren't long enough, wear the French cuffs uncuffed—let them dangle. This is not only a fashionable move right now, it will solve your length problem. The blouse is styled with a placket or fly front, and comes with cuff buttons. It's available for \$51 in French blue and ivory, tall sizes 8 to 22. The same style is available in white cotton, same sizes, for \$53.

Dear Marylou: Is it true that you shouldn't wear the same shoes several days in a row? Why?

The average person's feet has 250,000 sweat glands and produces a half-pint of sweat per day, and shoes absorb a good bit of it. They need at least a day to allow that moisture to evaporate. Changing shoes should also mean changing heel heights. This prevents foreshortening of calf muscles—something that can happen to women in high heels and men in cowboy boots.

Dear Marylou: Because I'm tall and came with long arms, I have a terrible time finding long-enough long-sleeved blouses. Even those available in tall shops and departments often end well above my wrists. Does anyone size women's blouses like men's shirts—with a choice in sleeve lengths?

Some women's shirts are offered with a choice of sleeve lengths, but not blouses. Reason: Blouses are more

Dear Marylou: What handbag will look newest-and-best-with a black fitted suit?

A black patent leather (or vinyl) clutch bag. Or, the same style in color, if you prefer. Fashion is clutching the clutch as the perfect bag for all the retro looks ahead, and patent is back as the favorite expression of shine. No one questions the practicality of a shoulderbag, but for the moment, fashion is giving it the cold shoulder.

Dear Marylou: Can the paper dresses offered by DKNY really be machine washed? How can you wash paper?

You can wash Donna Karan's "paper" dress for DKNY by putting it in the washing machine, setting the controls for the gentle cycle and cold water, adding your usual detergent and letting it complete each cycle. Then let the dress hang to dry. (Do not dry in dryer. Do not iron.) Karan says the fabric is

both high-tech and high-strength, and if treated according to the care instructions "will last as long as any comparable fabrication." The "paper" in this instance is the same stuff used by Federal Express. Karan calls it "paper" because it looks like paper. She says she chose it for 14 styles in her spring collection "because it is fast fashion." And because the future of fashion—the newness and the modern-ness—stems from the new technology of fabrics.

Dear Marylou: What style shoe and what heel height look best with knee-length dresses?

Milan designer Miuccia Prada, who was the first designer in the 1990's to show dresses and skirts at knee length, believes the best heel for this proportion is the high heel—anywhere from three to four inches. She shows this height for spring in wedge-soled sandals and ankle straps as well as round toe pumps.

Quick Tips from Mary

by Mary Marrone
of Mary Kay Cosmetics

Mesmerizing Mascara Without the Mystery

To apply mascara, brush on lower lashes first, and then to upper lashes. When applying mascara to the upper lashes, begin by brushing down on top of the lash and then up on the underside. Reapply one or two additional coats for longer, thicker looking lashes. Let mascara dry between coats.

After opening, never "pump" mascara. Replace mascara every 3 to 4 months to insure mascara is free of harmful bacteria. To avoid drying and clumping, periodically soak closed mascara in a cup of warm water.

Gaby's Gems

by Georgia Ann

KITCHEN TREATMENTS

A multitude of commercial products are available for skin care, but you can easily create your own formulations.

Facial Mask To tighten skin

- 1 tbsp. honey
- 1 egg white

Beat egg white and let sit. Apply honey to face and massage for 3 minutes. Leave on for 5 minutes, then rinse with warm water. Apply egg white to face and let dry. Leave on 10 minutes and rinse.

Face and Body Lotion To moisturize skin

- 1 cup dried chamomile or
- 4 chamomile tea bags
- 2 tbsp. honey
- 1 cup of milk, cream or buttermilk
- 4 tsp. wheat germ or bran

Soak chamomile in milk or cream for 3 hours. Strain mixture. Add honey and wheat germ or bran. Stir to form lotion. Apply at night. Refrigerate (will last a week).

Cleanser To clean face and body:

- 4 tbsp. oatmeal or cornmeal
- 4 tbsp. plain yogurt
- Cheesecloth

Mix oatmeal or cornmeal with yogurt. Apply directly to face, then rinse. For the body, place in square of cheesecloth and tie in bundle for scrubbing.

Milk Bath To soften skin (soothe nerves)

- 2 cups whole milk or
- 3 cups prepared powder milk
- 1 cup boiling water
- 1 cup dried chamomile or
- 4 chamomile tea bags

Steep tea bags or loose chamomile in water for 30 minutes. Then remove tea bags or, if using loose chamomile, strain liquid through cheesecloth. Mix liquid with milk and add to bathwater.

- or
- 1 cup powdered milk
- Cheesecloth

Tie powdered milk into square of cheesecloth and place pouch in bathwater.

One More Skin Treat To tighten pores

- 1 egg white
- juice of one lemon
- 1 1/2 Tablespoons of raw oatmeal
- 1 teaspoon of witch hazel
- 1 teaspoon of water

Mix egg white with lemon juice and brush on the T-zone; let dry, then rinse. Slough with oatmeal mixed with witch hazel and water.

The Femme Mirror

Tri-Ess National Helpline!

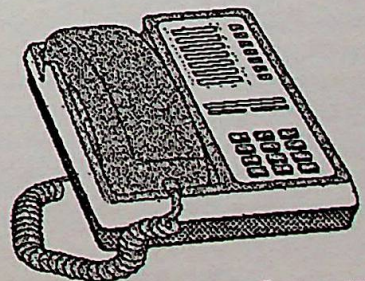
Do you have a question about Tri-Ess? Do you need help regarding media outreach in your area? Are you interested in starting a Tri-Ess chapter? Tri-Ess Executive Director Carol Beecroft may be reached at the Tri-Ess National Office in Tulare, California at:

1-209-688-9246

Carol is often available to speak to radio audiences via long-distance telephone hook-up, and she is compiling a list of members who are able to appear on radio or television, or speak before college classes.

Does your local chapter have a Helpline? Ideally, each Tri-Ess chapter should operate a Helpline and list the number with the local Crisis Hotline, Gay Switchboard, Mental Health Clinics, etc. The expenses involved would vary with local phone rates and installation charges. As a second, unlisted line in a sister's home, a Helpline does not take a lot of money. What it does take is considerable dedication on the part of the sister volunteering to answer the Helpline. However, this duty may be rotated among several qualified volunteers by means of Call Forwarding. How about it, ladies? Does your chapter have a Helpline yet?

Ed.Note: Georgia's column appears in the Sigma Nu Rho News Briefs. In the Spring 1995 Mirror, Georgia's name was not listed with her column entitled "Dealing With Acne." We regret this oversight.



T.E.S.T.

Tri-Ess Shoe Talk

by Jacklynn NJ-3793-L

Dear Sisters,

Hi! It's great to be back and being able to share with all of you some tips on shoe care. Remember "Happy, healthy feet, carry a happy healthy person."

I first would like to share with all of you what it means to me to be able to say with pride that I've grown within myself and I have learned, accepted and understand that I will always have this desire to crossdress. As much as I love and enjoy my masculine self, I've learned to love and enjoy my feminine self. Just because I cross dress does not make me a bad person.

Yet, in others' eyes, it seems that way. They will say you're crazy, nuts, sick, perverted or whatever. That's because they fear the unknown. They do not want to broaden their knowledge about things. So you can call me all the names you want to, but remember, you don't know the things I feel inside. You don't know the joy and pleasures of finding a beautiful human being within yourself. For me, Jacklynn is a warm caring person. One who enjoys every aspect of being feminine.

I am still me. I am still a husband, father and grandfather. I am no different from any other man who cares for this family except, I've found a lot of self pleasures and enjoyment with crossdressing. That does not make me a bad person.

I've done it all. I've coached baseball, football, basketball and soccer. I've been a Sunday school teacher, superintendent of our Sunday school; I've been an usher and head usher in our church. I do all the things around the house like every other man does, so his house looks nice for all the family.

Yet, you seem to think it's stupid for me, or another heterosexual male, to have a passionate desire to crossdress. So to all your comments I'll say, "Sorry!" You don't know me or what I feel inside. I have no problem with who I am and I don't intend to. I am still me and always will be. It just seems like you have the problem.

I've learned that I cannot stop and that I do not want to stop doing something that brings me a lot of enjoyment and pleasure. So why add to it? Again, if a person doesn't like what I do, then it is his problem, not mine. I am proud of my masculine self and also very proud, confident and comfortable with my feminine self. Both combined have made me a better human being living in this world of ours.

So to all my sisters, whomever you are, either out of the closet, or in the closet, going out in public or just staying home, enjoy, enjoy, enjoy! Because you are who you are and what you do does not make you a bad person. Not for nothing. You are loved for who you are and for what you enjoy doing by this sister. Kick up your heels and smile and be proud of who you are and what you enjoy doing. God's peace and love to each and everyone of you.

Now let's start talking shoes.....



Remember whatever I talk about in shoe care pertains to both men's and women's shoes.....

1. SHINE. Always keep your shoes polished. Nothing looks worse than a person dressed and wearing shabby looking shoes. It only takes a few minutes to polish them. If you don't have the time then drop them off at your local shoe repair shop.

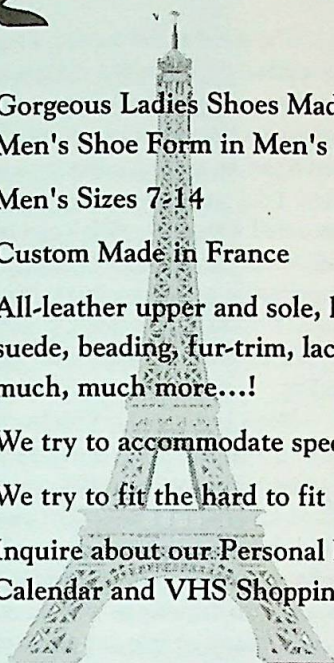
2. HEELS. Here is something I wrote a long time ago in the Femme Mirror, so I'll write it again, for all our new sisters: "Have you ever wondered why ladies' heels wear out?" For every step she walks, the average woman takes two thousand four hundred thirty seven (2437) steps. After five miles, a one hundred twenty pound woman has hammered seven hundred thirty one tons into her heels. A one hundred twenty pound steel hammer striking at the same rate would have to be replaced every three weeks and in four months would cut a hole one mile deep. Now if that holds true for a one hundred twenty pound woman, can you imagine why we go through our heels even faster?

Also, ladies, on all new shoes the heels are made of plastic, and your chances of slipping are great. Nothing would be worse than slipping and hurting yourself, and ending up in the E.R while you were out for an evening. How do you explain to someone why you were dressed this way? Have your new heels changed to rubber and don't look for trouble.

I hope some one found my tips useful. Also if you have any questions pertaining to your shoes, feel free to write to me through our Pen Pal system, and I'll answer all letters. Also to those of you who do drop me a letter, let me know all about yourself and include a photo. I love to hear from other sisters.

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Celebrate International Transgender Employment Day!

by Phyllis R. Frye

The Board of Directors of ICTLEP proudly announces a celebration entitled "International Transgender Employment Day" on Monday, September 4th, coinciding with Labor Day. The International Bill of Gender Rights (IBGR), states that the third gender right of all human beings is "The Right to Secure and Retain Employment and to Receive Just Compensation."

Celebrations may be formal or informal, large or small, public or private, as is appropriate to the local situation. ICTLEP suggests it contain the following elements:

1. Declare aloud and take into one's own heart "The Right to Secure and Retain Employment and to Receive Just Compensation."

2. Commemorate and document our openly transgender employment victories. Many governmental bodies have explicitly guaranteed transgender rights to employment. Also, many employers have shown great compassion toward

transgenders either by retaining transgenders or by hiring transgenders with the status (ranging from at-home crossdresser through to full-time transsexual) being openly acknowledged. They should be recognized. Finally, many individual transgenders have confronted a hostile job situation and prevailed. They are role models. Each of these should be documented in writing and sent to ICTLEP for data base development.

3. Document transgender employment discrimination. Most lawmakers are unaware of the challenges faced by transgenders. They need to see how many transgenders have been fired, harassed, intimidated or denied promotion or re-employment solely for being transgendered. (The incidents of transsexuals being fired are the obvious, but these incidents also include situations such as the married, heterosexual crossdresser who is fired or denied a promotion because management discovered

that he crossdressed in the privacy of his home or ventured to a group meeting once a month while crossdressed. These situations are no different from the gender firings of many 1950-60's women who sought to wear trousers to the office.) Compilation of a data base and collection of specific case histories is necessary. ICTLEP can only collect the information: transgenders must write it down and send it in. Send for the form — a small donation to offset costs is optional — to ICTLEP Employment Documentation Project, P.O. Box 65, Kensington, MD 20895 USA.)

4. In the USA, raise funds to send someone from your local gathering to Washington DC on October 2 and 3 for National Transgender Lobby Day. For more information, contact Riki Anne Wilchins of Transsexual Menace (TM) at 212/645-1753 or riki@pipeline.com or Karen Anne Kerin of It's Time America (ITA) at 802/223-4756 or kkerin@vermontlaw.edu.

Summer 1995

I Missed My Chance

by Debbie "Hafin" TX-3143-H

Recently, eight of us from TGEA and WBA went cross-dressed to the theatre to see the play What the Butler Saw. The performance we attended was billed as "drag-night." The advertisement mentioned that there was a cast party and a discount for those people who came in drag.

The play was great. The evening was interesting and troublesome for some of us. Personally, I felt like we were in a fishbowl and everyone was watching the cross-dressers. But, what did I expect, given the advertisement? Besides, it is impossible for a group of eight cross-dressers to "pass" anywhere. Before I go any further I need to make a point perfectly clear. There were no incidents; nobody gave us a hard time. There were some smiles and stares, but everyone was polite. The "public" treated us wonderfully. But back to my thoughts.

In retrospect, it is interesting that I found the fishbowl situation unsettling while other members of our group were quite at ease. This caused me to reflect on "why." Why did I find the situation unsettling? Am I ashamed of being transgendered? Am I ashamed of being me? I, as Debbie, often go to malls, movies, and restaurants with my wife. I pass the majority of the time, but occasionally I'm "read." Much like the theatre incident, when I'm "read" I normally get flustered, embarrassed or upset. I always assumed I was upset because I didn't do a good enough job with my make-up, voice, mannerisms, etc. But maybe - just maybe; I'm not comfortable with myself.

A number of years ago an "experienced" cross-dresser told me to be proud of who I am. Dress how I want to dress - don't worry about passing. Believe me, she didn't try; she always looked like a man wearing women's clothing, — she didn't care. She interacted with

Summer 1995



the public all the time. She was very comfortable with herself. I always admired that quality in her, but - big but - her image embarrassed me. I thought that she projected a derogatory image of cross-dressers - sorta "freakish" or "funny." She attracted a lot of attention, but she always just smiled. She would talk and interact with everyone; she was always polite. She was very comfortable in public and felt that people should take her as she was.

I don't know why, but I've never been comfortable with that attitude — I've always tried to pass, tried to hide behind make-up and female paraphernalia. Actually, I've spent a tremendous amount of effort and money on voice training, make-up lessons, wigs, pads, and a spent hundreds of hours practicing so I could pass. I've been fairly successful.

The theatre incident makes me wonder if her philosophy was deeper than I ever imagined. I wonder if her philosophy is more realistic and more beneficial than mine. I came to realize that when I pass, I don't project a positive transgendered image; I don't project any image - everyone thinks I'm a woman. It is the times I don't pass and have to deal with the public that I have the chance to make a positive statement about transgendered people.

The night at the theatre, I missed the perfect opportunity to let the world see that we're normal people. We're not crazy, strange or perverted - I was just a guy in a dress enjoying a great play. I did project a positive statement, because I was polite, didn't spit on the sidewalks, etc. But, I missed a golden opportunity to have a very positive impact. I could have interacted with the public instead of running away and hiding.

Have I changed my philosophy? Am I going to stop trying to pass? Am I going to wear men's pants, women's shoes, lipstick and a mustache? No! I'll either dress as a man or woman. I firmly believe the public isn't ready to fully accept men dressing as women or vice versa. Many people still think we're different, a bit strange. The last thing I want to do is bolster that belief.

I will work on my self-image and work on accepting myself as I am. But I realize that our public image is not determined by how good we look or how well we pass, but by how we act when the public realizes we're transgendered. It is the times when we're discovered that we represent the entire transgendered community.

It is an awesome responsibility — representing the entire transgendered community. The last thing we need is to make the public think we're a joke or ill-mannered. So I'm asking you to join me and continue to work at presenting yourself as a woman, and when your secret is discovered — project a positive image. Don't run and hide; instead, smile and use it as an opportunity for outreach. It will be your chance to shine and show the public that we have class and dignity. Show them we are not ashamed of ourselves and we're nice people - just like them. I missed my chance; don't miss yours. It took awhile, but I've realized that a friendly smile can be the best outreach.

"Someone wants to take my dress away, and my purse and panties, too."

by Deborah Dean

Like a whisper in my ear, it came from "The Grapevine" — a burr-in-the-saddle comment about my favorite female personage, from a close friend of mine. "Someone" wants to take my dress away, and my purse and panties, too. (I did not "look good enough" to suit her.) The remark perhaps says more about the state of her mind than the state of my attire, but, in a more certain form, this was surely sent flying from the grassy knoll of her own self doubt.

I can only speculate on how much more useful that this information might have been in the form of constructive criticism, even welcomed. Instead, I must deal with them in the form given, that of remarks that measure the true size of the original speaker.

Specifically, this is an opportunity to expand upon the meaning of the efforts of one's passibility upon others, snide remarks, and, the banning effects of rejection. I immediately thought of an episode in childhood. Accompanying my parents and their friends to our local, small town theatre, we sat in the balcony, where there was a low wall that separated us from the blacks (not the word used) on the other side. In a quizzical mood, I asked why this was so.

"Because they are supposed to be there."

"Well, why?"

"Because we want them there! And that's just the way it is!"

"Is that an answer?" I asked myself ten years later.



The house lights go down, fade into a very poignant scene of a black mother going to see her daughter at school. Unbeknownst to her, the daughter had been "passing" for white in the classroom. The daughter is upset and runs from the classroom, wanting to deny her mother's existence. The film otherwise dealt with people who denied who they were, trying to become someone that they were not. Some learned the price of this in time, others did not.

Add ten more years looking back, and I do not at all envy my parents in having to explain this stuff when we returned home. Also, my mother had had a front row seat to what Hitler did. The movie, of course, was *Imitation of Life* with Lana Turner. Not being accepted by one's group is not what I exactly had in mind, yet it almost seems as distant now, as those attitudes toward blacks. These are relics from a land of hula hoops and tailfins, a strange look and feel, yet familiar through the portal of a good memory.

It is said that we can accept others only to the extent that we can accept ourselves. It is said that others often are a signpost, or mirror, of our own thoughts and fears. We are like the Shakespearian lady that doth protest too much.

Our transvestism is basically a self-centered activity. We are turned on by it, we dress, and we like the way we feel. We like the way we look. And for some, it connects us with otherwise inaccessible parts of our personality. Often we do it for ourselves, alone. Alone with our own thoughts. Alone with our image in the mirror. And, alone, it is easy to become

attached to only that part of the image that we most like, much the same as our impression of many media-processed celebrities, and we buy accordingly. Against this yardstick we judge ourselves and each other.

But do we measure up to our idealized picture? Probably not. And we are made even more unhappy by things in our world. Many people are only too eager to make us aware of this, as they are then more able to sell us 'solutions' to the 'problems' they help create. A lot of products are sold. Even some attractive "genetic girls" cannot seem to mutilate themselves enough with cosmetic surgery in search of an illusive ideal. Someone said that our needs as human beings are actually very few, but our wants as Twentieth Century Consumers are endless.

We are who we are, some of us born, others made, this way. There are men, there are women. Men have one kind of plumbing, women have the

The Femme Mirror

other. The range of differences in humanity is such that any other attribute has more range of differences within the group of men, or the group of women, than the differences between the groups as a whole. This is a broad way of saying that there are hairier women, and shorter men. And, still, we sit around trying to convince ourselves how transgendered we are.

A crossdresser I know is huge, even by male standards. Does he "pass"? I do know that "she" is often accepted as part of the social landscape. A person (male) at work passes quite well, as female, "better" than some "genetic girls". But everyone "knows" anyway.

How much is enough, then? Very probably, if you do not learn to like life and yourself, then buying someone else's products and ideas of the "right look" may be your only way to make it in this life.

I was able to utilize this criticism of my appearance to my betterment in bagging a leftover demon or two within myself. So the "Fashion Police" ended up doing me a favor of sorts. But we need to realize that this is no mere silly masquerade for some, but rather, a very extension of who we are. And, we need to consider our responsibility if this happens to a younger or less self aware person, and she is pushed beyond the point of return.

As for myself, I believe that a certain flexibility is needed more often than not for the care and feeding of friends, and that a lot of what life offers is best seen as a learning experience. I am comfortable with what I do, and keep it hidden only from those who would be hurt. I do not apologize for my transvestism, nor do I need someone else's concept of beauty to validate myself. I want to be me while doing this.

I go out in public with varying degrees of success. Sometimes I am read, sometimes I am not. I do know that in a public encounter, my reaction decides what happens, most of the time. And, (knocking on wood) I have never had an incident in public that I could not turn to advantage. I find a certain irony in being more accepted by the anonymous public than the crossdressing community. But I am told that this is a common experience, and not unique to me at this time and place.

All I wanted was to wear a dress!



Tri-Ess Chapters and Forming Chapters

Region 1 (New England)

New York City Metro Area
CHI DELTA MU
P.O. Box 1
River Edgel, NJ 07661-0001
Contact: Barbra Taylor NJ-3291-T
Phone: 201-439-9618

Albany NY Metro Area
LAMBDA CHI LAMBDA
Contact: Sharon Ann Stuart
Box 1010, Cooperstown NY 13326
Phone: (607) 547-4118

Buffalo, NY Metro Area
NU PHI CHI "Buffalo Belles"
7954 Transit Rd. S197
Williamsville, NY 14221
Contact: Denise NY-3404-N
Phone: 716-643-2626

Region 2 (Middle Atlantic/ Ohio Valley)

Trenton, NJ Metro Area
SIGMA NU RHO
P.O. Box 9255, Trenton, NJ 08650
Contact: Donna Marie NJ-2268-G
Phone: 1-800-480-3152

Northern Ohio, West PA Area
ALPHA OMEGA
P.O. Box 2053,
Sheffield Lake, OH 44054-0053
Contact: Elaine Lee OH-9034-B
Phone: 216-556-0067

Toledo, OH Metro Area
FORMING CHAPTER
Contact: Ronda OH-2499-M

Gouldsboro, PA Metro Area
FORMING CHAPTER
Contact: Sue PA-2164-C

Lansing, MI Metro Area
FORMING CHAPTER
Contact: Donna Marie NJ-2268-G

Region 3 (Southeast)

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KAPPA BETA
P.O. Box 12101, Charlotte, NC 28220
Contact: Sherri NC3723-C

Atlanta, GA Metro Area
SIGMA EPSILON
Box 272, Roswell, GA 30077
Contact: Joan FL-2520-B
Phone: 404-552-4415

Memphis, TN Metro Area
(Arkansas/ Western Tennessee)
MU SIGMA
P.O. Box 24031, Little Rock AR 72221
Contact: Linda Peacock AR-9004-N
Phone: 501-227-8798

Nashville, TN Metro Area
ALPHA PI OMEGA
Contact: Laury TN-3934-W
P.O. Box 784, Brentwood, TN 37024-0784

Region 4 (Mid-South)

Dallas/ Ft. Worth, TX Metro Area
DELTA OMEGA
P.O. Box 141924, Irving, TX 75014
Contact: Michelle TX-3816-G
Phone: 214-264-7103

Houston, TX Metro Area
TAU CHI
P.O. Box 1105, Alief, TX 77411
Contact: Jane TX-1757-M
Phone: (713) 988-8064 or
Contact: Peggy TX-9014-T
Phone: (713)347-TRIS

East Texas Area
EPSILON TAU
Box 945, New Waverly TX 77358
Contact: Judy Daniels TX-1426-T
Phone: 409-344-6014

Jackson, MS Metro Area
BETA CHI
P.O. Box 31253, Jackson, MS 39206
Contact: Lee Frances MS-2125-H

Oklahoma City, OK Metro Area
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P.O. BOX 60354
Oklahoma City, OK 73146-0354
Contact: Vanessa OK-3697-K

Region 5 (Mid-West)

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CHI
P.O. Box 40, Wood Dale, IL 60191
Contact: Deanna IL-1155-B
Phone: (708) 364-9514

Minneapolis, MN Metro Area
BETA GAMMA
P.O. Box 8591
Minneapolis, MN 55408
Contact: Sofronia Anne MN-3264-G
Phone: 612-870-8536

Region 6 (Mid-Continental)

Denver, CO Metro Area
DELTA
Box 16208, Denver, CO 80216
Contact: Diane CO-2387-L
Phone: (301)595-5TRI

Salt Lake City, UT Metro Area
ALPHA RHO
P.O. Box 1586, Orem, UT 84059-1586
Contact: Janette UT-2880-C
Phone: (801) 553-8141

New Mexico, So. Colorado, W. Texas
PHI (FIESTA)
8200 Montgomery NE #241
Albuquerque, NM 87109
Contact: Jaye NM-1424-R
Phone: 505-831-2285

Region 7 (Northwest)

Calgary, Alberta Metro Area
PHI SIGMA
Box 81115, 755 Lake Bonavista Dr.
S.E.
Calgary, AB T2J 7C9, Canada
Contact: Audrey Allen FCAB-3337-K
Phone: (403)271-2156

Moscow, ID Metro Area
FORMING CHAPTER
Contact: Laurie ID-1704-W

Region 8 (Southwest)

Los Angeles, CA Metro Area
ALPHA
Box 36091, Los Angeles, CA 90036
Contact: Virginia Prince
Phone: (213) 876-6141

Tulare, CA Metro Area
TRI CHI
P.O. Box 194, Tulare, CA 93275
Contact: Carol Beecroft
Phone: (209)688-9246

Santa Cruz/Monterey Metro Area
FORMING CHAPTER
Contact: Fran CA-1282-V

Eureka, CA Metro Area
FORMING CHAPTER
Contact: Lois CA-2148-M

Phoenix, AZ Metro Area
ALPHA ZETA
Box 1738, Tempe, AZ 85280
Contact: Cindy N. AZ-2817-N

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Phone: 702-387-3891

Honolulu, HI Metro Area
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Region 9 (International)

Eastern Canada & Overseas
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Contact: Denise FL-2746-S
Phone: 407-657-7161
or Alice FL-3077-E
Phone: 407-677-9540

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Tri-Ess Pen Pals

Many sisters have written over the years to express their disappointment in not receiving replies to their letters to other Tri-Ess sisters. It seems that while some sisters are wonderfully prolific pen pals, others (for a variety of reasons) are not. To assist those who would like to receive lots of letters, we have compiled a "Pen-Pal List". All you have to do is promise to reciprocate. Just fill out and sign the form below and send it to:

Carol Beecroft
P.O. Box 194
Tulare, CA 93275

"I promise the courtesy of a reply to all correspondence from my Tri-Ess sisters."

Femme Name _____

Code Number _____

Here's how to write a Pen Pal through the Forwarding Service:

1) Write your letter to your chosen Pen Pal. Include your picture if you wish. If you choose not to include your own return address at first, be sure you include your own Code Number in your letter.

2) Place your letter in an envelope, affix correct postage, and lightly pencil in the name and Code Number of your Pen Pal on the front.

3) Place this envelope inside another envelope and address this outer envelope to:

Tri-Ess Forwarding Service
P.O. Box 194,
Tulare CA 93275

4) Include your return address on the outer envelope and be sure to apply correct postage. Once received at the Forwarding Service, your inner envelope will be properly addressed to your Pen Pal and sent on its way. If or when you and your Pen Pal choose to exchange letters directly is up to you. Have fun, Sisters!

Summer 1995

Here are the Pen Pals:

AZ-3954-B	Rebecca
CA-1765-B	Cindy
CA-3845-C	Elaine
CA-1282-V	Fran
CA-3354-N	Michelle
CA-4009-W	Paula
FL-2789-S	Cynthia
FL-3434-C	Debi
FL-3892-B	Jeanne
FL-2520-B	Joan Ann
FL-3720-R	Karen Rose
FL-3640-C	Norma
FL-4046-J	Rita
HI-3562-A	Alana
IL-3623-G	Nancy
MO-3752-B	Laura
NC-3743-H	Ann
NC-3723-C	Sherri
NJ-3818-L	Carol Ann
NJ-3884-K	JoAnn
NJ-2548-W	Joanne M.
NJ-3775-B	Loren
NY-4022-B	Cathy Ann
NY-1320-N	Connie
NY-3433-T	Donna
NY-3277-H	Evelyn
NY-3943-F	Lisa
NY-3717-P	Tammie
PA-2542-K	Jan
TN-1230-H	Rita
VA-2642-I	Madelyn
VA-3948-R	Marjorie
VA-3401-W	Samantha
WI-3846-L	Adrienne
FCO-4010-S	Julie Ann

If you wrote us asking to be placed on the Pen Pal List and your name does not appear above, please write us again. We are sorry, but sometimes we do "drop the ball." (Or, in this case, the name!) If your dues had lapsed as of June 30, 1995, your name was been dropped from this list. If you have since reinstated and wish to be a Pen Pal, please write and request that your name be listed again.

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Big Sister Report

by Cynthia Silva FL-2789-SÉ

The request for Big Sisters has been declining over the past few months. I hope that the reason for this decline is that most of the new members are joining Tri-Ess through a local Chapter and the Chapter is providing the help and guidance they need. If this is the case, then I am all for it.

Several new members have called my attention to a problem with the way they have been receiving their mail. It has caused some anxiety attacks and/or some rather tense moments when they received their mail. The return address had the femme name and/or Chapter name, the mailing address used their femme name or the envelope was thin enough to read the enclosed letter through.

As we become adjusted to our life as crossdressers, we have a tendency to forget that a new member is testing the waters, so to speak, for the first time and is sensitive about anyone knowing about their crossdressing. A few suggestions about addressing an envelope may be in order.

1. The return address should be generic, no femme name, no Tri-Ess name. Solution: address, city, state and zip code.

2. The mailing address should not reflect their femme name.

Solution: If in doubt, use the first initial of the first name and the last name, then the known address.

3. Use a security type envelope. If we use a little thought before hand, it will save a lot of anxiety attacks on the receiving end.

Several new members have been asking, "Is there anything available for my wife?"

YES, YES, YES! Linda Peacock, Director, Wives/Partners Concerns, publishes a superb quarterly newsletter, *The Sweetheart Connection*. The newsletter is filled with help, ideas and suggestions on coping with crossdressing from the wife/partner point of view. It is directed toward the wife/partner, regardless of her level of acceptance or understanding. Linda is able to do some limited one-on-one assistance. She also heads up the fabulous conference, S.P.I.C.E., every July. This conference is primarily for wives/partners, husbands may attend, and CROSSDRESSING NOT PERMITTED. Any wife/partner needing help or wanting to help should contact Linda. Her address is:

Linda Peacock
P. O. Box 24031
Little Rock, AR 72221

Donna Martin wrote indicating that there are several sisters in foreign countries looking for sisters who would be a combination of a Big Sister and a pen pal. I understand that they do not really want a Big Sister as such, but would

dearly love to correspond with interested sisters. They are looking for something more than a casual correspondence. Anyone interested may write to them via the Tri-Ess Forwarding Service. These sisters are:

FAUS-4077-K	Terri, Australia
FBEL-3974-M	Sally, Belgium
FBEL-3975-C	Sally, England
FGER-1528-B	Rita, Germany
FGER-1529-M	Ulla, Germany
FGER-3459-K	Eva, Germany
FHOK-2741-L	Rosemary, Hong Kong
FKOR-3958-A	Rosaline, Korea
FMEX-1535-P	Betty, Mexico
FMEX-1770-M	Ana Bertha, Mexico
FPHI-2346-C	Jenny, Philippines

As far as I know, they all speak and write English, so you should have no problems. I know they will love corresponding with you. Donna did mention that FKOR-3958-A, Rosaline, Korea, was most anxious to correspond with several sisters. Writing to these sisters is a superb way to foster Tri-Ess throughout the world.

If any of you want to be a Big Sister or are in need of one, please let me know.

Cynthia Silva
P. O. Box 18884
Tampa, FL 33679-8884

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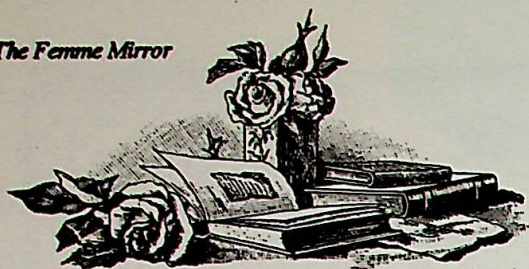
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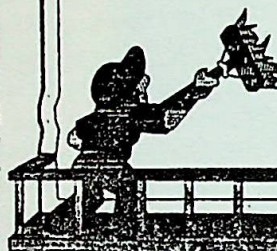
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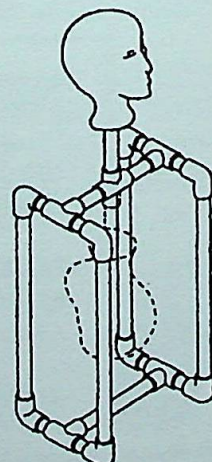
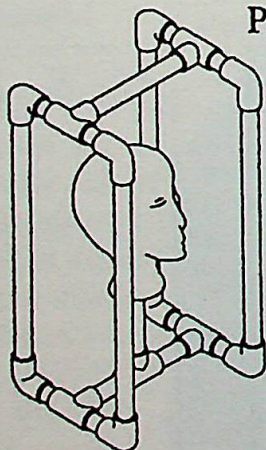
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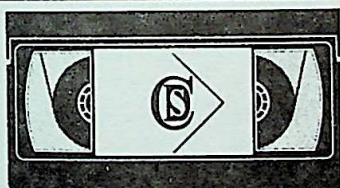
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 actress!! -- and
 and that makes me
 look like just an
 ordinary --- oh
 I do need a
 lot of
HELP!!

Who Is This Woman In The Mirror?

by Stacey

One day as I was standing in front of the mirror,
I saw a different reflection looking back at me.
Who was this woman in the mirror across from me?
She was tall, thin and quite beautiful.

As I looked in the mirror at her
I felt as if I'd seen her before.
I turned away for a moment and she was gone.
As the days passed by, all I could think about was,
Who was this woman I saw in the mirror?

I wished she would appear again.
My heart was lonely and empty without her.
I had no friends.
My life was going nowhere.

Then one day as I was sleeping I had a dream.
I was looking in the mirror.
Oh! How I liked what I saw in the mirror across from me!
It was that woman in the mirror looking back at me.

My heart was happy.
I had found a friend.
My life now felt complete.
I had found someone who was kind, caring,
compassionate and loving.

Who was this woman looking back at me
from within the mirror?
As I awoke I realized it was the Second Self within me
Looking back at me from within the mirror.

Now I know who that woman was in the mirror
Looking back at me.